

LET'S SPLIT
WHY ELTON JOHN HAS
LEFT HIS PARTNER

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THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 13 May 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,609

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

This sad pile of corpses may spell the end for Suharto

IT IS only hours since they died, but already the six young men in the mortuary of the Sumber Waras Hospital have shed the look of the living. Hendriawan, the economics student, has a necklace of dried blood around his neck.

Heri Heryanto, of the engineering faculty, has half-open eyes and pallid, glassy skin. A weeping young woman touches his cheek and springs back with a cry at how cold he is. They lie side by side in a strip-lit room where the mosquitoes buzz, four more reasons - if more were needed - for believing this is the beginning of the end of President Suharto.

Richard Lloyd Parry witnesses a brutal confrontation between police and students in which six people died

A year ago the Indonesian leader was one of the most respected leaders in Asia, a man who unified the world's fourth-largest nation and oversaw three decades of steady growth. Since last summer the Asian economic crisis has destroyed President Suharto's economic achievements and this year's student protests, culminating in last night's bloodshed, have completely undermined his claims to legitimacy.

Yesterday afternoon, 5,000 students from Trisakti University, Jakarta, were demonstrating - noisily but peacefully - for his overthrow. Such protests have become commonplace in Indonesia this year, and this one began as they all do - with speeches and slogans and songs. It ended with a charge by police who beat up those they could catch, and chased others inside their campus where they were picked off with rubber and live bullets. Apart from the six confirmed dead, more than 60 people were injured in an incident which will escalate drastically the nationwide

campaign of protest against President Suharto. The violence of the police response was especially incomprehensible given the good-naturedness of the demonstration. It began in the morning in the campus of the private university, base for 29,000 of Jakarta's wealthiest and most fashionable students. It was one of the biggest demonstrations in the capital in two years and around noon it moved out of the campus and into the street. The aim was to march to the office of the mayor of Jakarta and present a petition. But a line of police blocked the path. Reinforcements soon arrived, including British-made tactics armoured cars, and the traffic was blocked along a six-lane road. But the atmosphere was calm and light-hearted - students passed roses to the troops and pushed them into their gun barrels. At 1.30pm there was an intense shower of tropical rain, and the crowd thinned out. "The chief of police praised them for conducting such a peaceful demon-

stration," said Professor Adi Andjono, dean of the university law faculty, after visiting the mortuary last night. "They didn't throw stones. There was no provocation. It is very cruel and it makes me so angry." By the late afternoon, the police and remaining students were backing away from one another. Then, just as everyone appeared about to pack up and go home, a plain clothes policeman got into a scuffle with a group of students. The police ran forward, shouldering their rifles and

brandishing their clubs. They charged the crowd, kicking and beating those they could catch, firing first blanks, then small-calibre rubber-coated rounds. The students fled back on to their campus and it is here that the worst atrocities appear to have taken place, as students were bunted down by pursuing police and snipers on a nearby overpass. "Some were shot in the head, some in the back, some in the chest," said Professor Andjono. "I saw blood in the grounds of the campus. This proves that they were shooting inside." Many students were unaccounted for last night.

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Anger as Europe votes to 'sell-off' genes

By Katherine Butler and Charles Arthur

THE European Parliament yesterday approved new legislation which lets biotechnology companies claim exclusive rights to the commercial use of genes - including human ones.

Opponents of the new measure say that it will effectively allow companies to "patent life", and warn that it will lead to an explosion in healthcare costs.

They claim private companies which have patented tests for naturally-occurring gene sequences - such as genes linked with breast cancer - could charge huge royalties from medical researchers or companies making diagnostic kits.

Plant and animal breeders may also have to pay royalties to the patent owners, as the directive covers all life forms that include genetic modifications.

But in last-minute concessions won from ministers, the MEPs ensured that the European-wide legislation outlaws cloning and patenting of human embryos, therapies that would transmit genetic changes to a person's descendants, and prevents patenting where modification of genetic make-up would cause suffering without any "substantial" benefit to man or animal, such as an animal genetically engineered to develop cancer.

Drugs companies insisted that patent protection for their work is essential to allow them to recoup research and development costs - which can run into tens of millions of pounds even for unsuccessful drugs -

and that the new Directive On The Patenting Of Biotechnological Inventions will speed up the search for cures for cancer and genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy by creating uniformity in patent rules across Europe.

"After 10 years of debate Europe can look forward to increased investment and renewed hope for patients," said a spokesman for the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations.

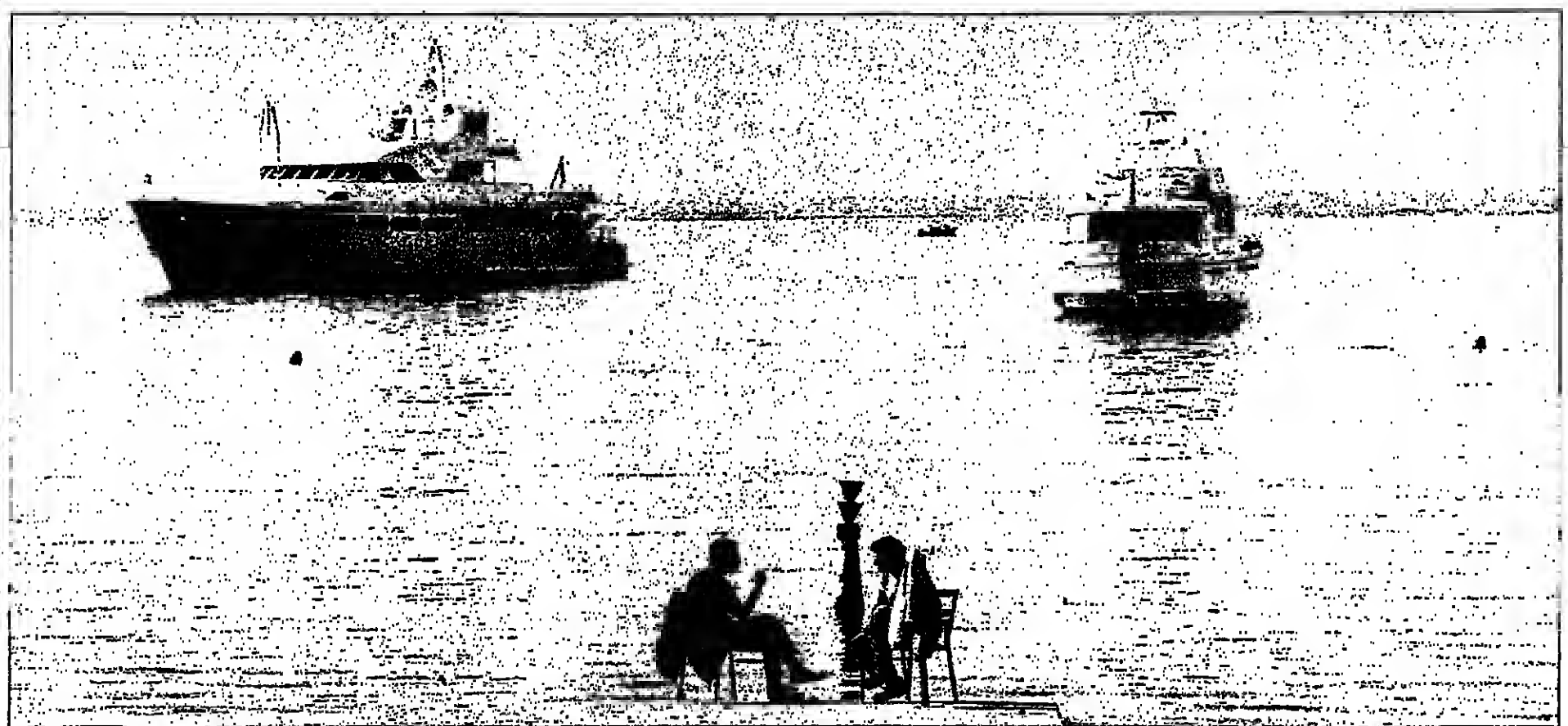
"It sends a strong signal that encourages Europe's pharmaceutical industry to invest even more in biotechnology."

But others are less optimistic. Patricia McKenna, a Green MEP, said: "In years to come, when a multinational will own our genes and when genetic resources are being plundered from the Third World we will look back on this disastrous day and apologise to our children and grandchildren."

Hiltrud Breyer, a German ecologist parliamentarian, commented: "The Euro Parliament has made an irresponsible decision. It has given carte blanche to the commercialisation of the human body."

The key to the argument is whether companies can now simply patent a gene - that is, a unique sequence of DNA "base pairs" with a named function. That has been the case in the United States since the 1980s. But in Europe, the rules varied widely. An earlier form of the Directive was thrown out by the Parliament in 1995.

Denial of rights, page 7
Leading article, page 18



Film-industry insiders getting down to business at an early-morning meeting in Cannes yesterday on the eve of the 51st festival. Grit and glitz, page 3. Photograph: Brian Harris

Cook: My officials are in the clear

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

ROBIN Cook yesterday pre-empted part of the Customs and Excise investigation into the Sierra Leone arms affair by clearing his officials of any part in a plot to breach the UN arms embargo. Showing all the fire for which he made his name in the House, the Foreign Secretary declared the innocence of Foreign Office staff, accused the Sandline mercenary group of lying in a bid to clear its name, and repudiated allegations that he was a shirker who did not read his Red Box papers.

At the end of an hour's cross-examination, he told Michael Howard, the

opposition spokesman, that he felt sorry for him: "Every radio broadcast today has promised that there's going to be an hour on the rack for me here. I have to say it has been quite a pleasant interlude."

A day of Government fightback began with the Prime Minister's official spokesman disclosing that Tejan Kabbah, the president of Sierra Leone, had sent Tony Blair an unsolicited testimonial, insisting he had received no military backing from British Government sources in restoring democracy to his country.

He also joined the Whitehall campaign against Sandline, saying the company's "role in the removal of the illegal regime and the return of my government has been exaggerated. I assure

you most emphatically that at no time did my government utilise mercenaries provided by Sandline. In fact, arrangements of third parties, of which I was aware, enabled Sandline to make a single delivery of light weapons for use by our Civil Defence Units only after the removal of the illegal regime and the liberation of Freetown..."

Later, replying to an emergency Commons question from Mr Howard, who said the entire affair was fast degenerating into a "shambles", with the Foreign Office "wholly out of ministerial control", Mr Cook said he was constrained by the Customs investigation.

But he gave notice that he would no longer stand by while wild allegations were

laid against defenceless officials. "I will say to the House that in all the papers on this affair, I have found no evidence that officials in the Africa Department were involved in any kind of conspiracy with Sandline, or gave any prior approval to a breach of the arms embargo."

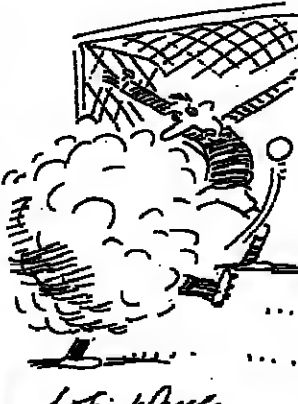
"The investigation which I have ordered will establish the truth. But, in the meantime, I have more faith in my officials than I have in Sandline."

Mr Cook said the first document he received about any breach of the arms embargo or a shipment of arms was on 28 April, when he saw the letter from Sandline's lawyers.

Who is Tony Buckingham? page 3
FO rebuked, page 10

Hoddle tells Gazza he can smoke through the World Cup

By Glenn Moore
Football Correspondent



PAUL GASCOIGNE, the footballer whose health and fitness have been a constant source of concern for England managers, was last night given permission to smoke his way through this summer's World Cup.

Until yesterday, Gascoigne's habit, now believed to be up to 20-a-day, had not attracted the attention of those other vices which earned him notoriety in

the past such as wife-beating and excessive drinking.

Yesterday, however, Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, confirmed Gascoigne's nicotine habit. He said it was a private matter and that making Gascoigne give up for the tournament might have an adverse effect.

The response brought an angry reaction from anti-smoking groups. Smoking may help Gascoigne's battle to keep his weight down but few babies

could be as harmful to his long-term fitness.

Gascoigne has long been indulged as a special talent but Hoddle suggested he may be losing patience when he said this week: "He is not out of the woods yet."

Clive Bates, the group director of the anti-smoking organisation Ash, criticised Gascoigne. "Gascoigne has basically given the green light to kids who'll say 'If Gazza smokes, it's all right for me.'"

Gascoigne is following a long tradition of outstanding footballers who smoked, most of them in the days before the extent of its dangers was known. Of England's 1966 World Cup winners, Bobby Moore, Jack and Bobby Charlton and Nobby Stiles all liked a puff, while Ray Wilson smoked a pipe.

Smokers' Xs: Felix (Brazil), Moore (England), J Charlton (England), Wilson (England), R Charlton (England), Socrates (Brazil), Ardiles (Argentina), Gerson (Brazil), Cruyff (Holland), Law (Scotland), Ginola (France).

In brief

Roddick quits

ANITA RODDICK, who opened the first branch of the Body Shop 22 years ago, blazing the trail for ethical entrepreneurs, is stepping down as chief executive. Page 5

Drug denial

REDUCING punishments for using cannabis in prison was not a signal that the Government condoned the use of soft drugs, George Howarth, the drugs minister, said yesterday. Page 8

Profit lesson

A US firm which runs schools for profit is discussing taking over failing schools with the Government. Edison Project leaders also held exploratory talks with Education Department officials about how a profit-making company might run schools which will aim to raise standards in poor areas. Page 11



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Arms to Africa crisis: At the heart of the Sierra Leone affair is a fabulously wealthy former commando who controls a highly secretive network of companies

Who is Tony Buckingham? And why does everyone want to talk to him?

By Fran Abrams,
Andrew Buncombe, Steve
Boggan and Mark Stucke

SIPPING rum and Cokes on board his £1.5m Admiral's Cup yacht *Easy Oars*, Tony Buckingham displays none of the Machiavellian traits that have brought him fantastic wealth.

With his easygoing nature and ready smile, the former Special Boat Squadron officer fits in well with the Cowes set and the racing fraternity. Deeper, however, and a different picture emerges - a picture of a man who can summon a small private army with little more than a few phone calls. And a man prepared to use that army to raise fabulous wealth.

Through his secretive network of companies, controlled with iron discipline, Mr Buckingham, 46, is emerging as a central figure in the Sierra Leone arms-to-Africa affair.

For the past 10 years, Mr Buckingham and his companies have been linked to a series of mercenary military operations launched on behalf of governments in power or exile and multinationals, in return for cash. He has always denied reports that some payments have been in the form of mineral concessions.

To unravel his complex web, it is necessary to go back to 1989 when he set up the South African and British "military consultancy" Executive Outcomes (EO) - essentially a highly professional unit of mercenaries comprising mainly South African commandos.

The first job for EO, which was also run by Ebevo Barlow, a former member of the South African special forces, was to protect oil companies in Angola threatened by the civil war.

The company that employed EO in Angola was Ranger Oil, which reportedly has links to the Buckingham-controlled Heritage Oil and Gas, the company that has made him a multi-millionaire.

Heritage Oil and Gas, coupled with his other companies, Diamond Works and Branch Energy, share offices at 535 King's Road, Chelsea, with Sandline International, the company which shipped arms and personnel to Sierra Leone for the counter coup which restored the elected president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in March.

EO's success in Angola earned it a contract from the Luanda government to provide men, training and weapons in the battle against UNITA rebels. It was a contract worth a reported \$40m (£25m), said to be made up partly of offshore oil rights.

Buoyed by its experiences in Angola, EO began looking for similar contracts elsewhere in

Africa. It settled on diamond and mineral-rich Sierra Leone where, in 1994, a growing rebellion - led by the Revolutionary United Front - had threatened to bring down the government of Valentine Strasser.

In May 1995, the Strasser government announced that EO had been asked to organise the training of the army. The announcement was made by Rupert Bowen, at the time a British diplomat but now employed by a Buckingham-controlled company. Four months later, that company - Branch Energy - had taken over a diamond mine in one of the areas being fought over. EO was reportedly rewarded with mineral and diamond concessions.

The name of Tony Buckingham surfaced again following a failed military operation in Papua New Guinea at the beginning of 1997. In scenes that attracted the attention of the world, a team of mercenaries led by the former British army officer Lt-Col Tim Spicer was thrown out of the country after a £22.5m contract to capture a copper mine from rebels on the island of Bougainville went wrong. The mercenaries, hired by the Papua New Guinea government to take the mine, were from Sandline International.

A commission of inquiry set up by a fresh Papua New Guinea administration examined the role of Sandline. Giving evidence, Lt-Col Spicer admitted Sandline and EO were "closely linked". At one stage, he said Tony Buckingham was Sandline's chairman, though he later retracted this when questioned by journalists.

However, the inquiry concluded that Mr Buckingham, a second man, Michael Grunberg, and to a lesser extent Lt-Col Spicer, were the "controllers" of Sandline International. Mr Grunberg is also a director of Diamond Works and, until April this year, a director of Plaza 107, the company which runs 535 King's Road.

Lt-Col Spicer, who ran the latest Sierra Leone operation, publicly denies that Sandline and Executive Outcomes are formally linked, but he and Mr Buckingham have said they are close friends who have passed work to each other.

In a rare interview, Mr Buckingham once said: "It is a fact that I did introduce Executive Outcomes into African countries that needed help. These were elected governments, they've always been invited in by them, and they've never acted against HMG's interests."

Born in November 1951, Mr Buckingham has homes in Eaton Square, Belgrave, Alresford in Hampshire, and

Tony Buckingham yachting at Cowes



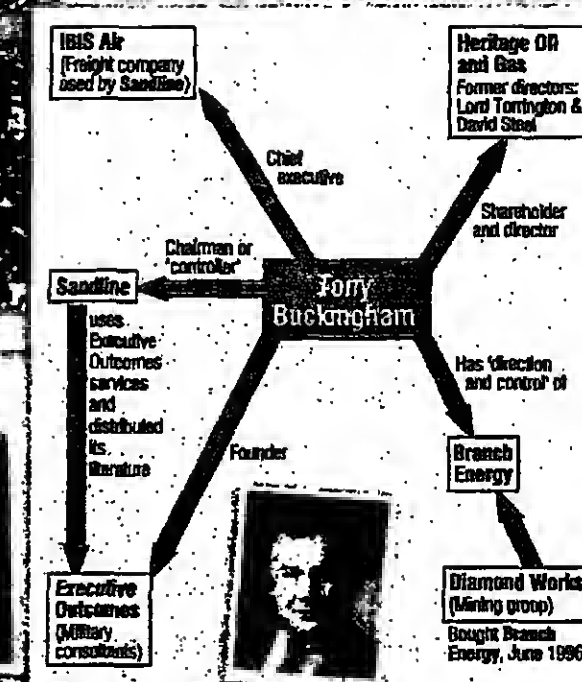
Guernsey. He was unavailable for comment yesterday.

Last year, when the Foreign Office organised a conference entitled "Restoring Democracy to Sierra Leone", two men from one of his companies were in attendance - the former diplomat Rupert Bowe - now a senior representative of Branch Energy - and Robert Brown.

Representing the Government was Tony Lloyd, the Foreign Office minister, who says he knew nothing of the plan to involve mercenaries. Mostly, talk at the conference was strictly of democratic restoration of Mr Kabbah's government. On the sidelines, however, the *realpolitik* favoured military intervention. One delegate said:

"The issue of restoring Kabbah to power by force was obviously sensitive. It was not something talked about openly, rather it was something whispered round the edges."

By then, however, Lt-Col Spicer and the men from Sandline were well advanced in their plans to provide military assistance to the deposed president. They went ahead with their mission in a manner that would have made Mr Buckingham proud. As he said last year, before the counter-coup: "Most people, including the UN, would agree they have been extremely useful. It's not just a wild-armed group of individuals that go on the rampage looking for thrills and spills."



Cook makes a meal of Tory 'hoo-haa'

ROBIN COOK has always been consistent in the past. If something has gone wrong, you always know that somebody else will be to blame. It might be his officials at the Foreign Office. It could be a ministerial sidekick. Or, if worst comes to worst, there's always the media.

On this occasion, it seemed as though the Foreign Secretary might be in real trouble. Despite all attempts to blame the usual suspects, the muddy waters have continued to lap higher.

But Mr Cook was in luck at yesterday's emergency questions. Whatever cock-ups or conspiracies he or the Government may or may not have been involved with ("mustn't prejudice the outcome of the inquiry" is a very useful phrase), it was clear that anything Labour had done wrong, the Tories had gone one worse. If the baying Tories were hoping for some fearful symmetry that would let them retrospectively off the hook regarding the arms-to-Iraq affair, they were to be disappointed.

Admittedly, the yes-people on the Labour side - including one little group that pointed fingers in swaying unison across the chamber from left to right, like a particularly naff clutch of disco dancers - were unimpressive. Better value were notorious troublemakers such as Dennis Skinner, who embarrassingly blamed Foreign Office officials for what had gone wrong. Mr Cook looked miffed by the mischievous dredging up of last week's

COMMONS SKETCH

"blame the mandarins" media spin, quite out of kilter with this week's official praise. Mr Cook insisted, with cloying sincerity, that he had "never detected" any resistance or conspiracies against him inside the Foreign Office.

Meanwhile, Michael Howard - who as shadow Foreign Secretary was entrusted with the unenviable task of making rhetorical mincemeat of Mr Cook - did his level best to pin his opponent down.

He cited the strange turnaround by which last week's "very serious allegations" had suddenly metamorphosed into mere "hoo-ha". He even argued that Mr Cook had made "a complete mockery of any pretensions he may have to an ethical foreign policy".

Unfortunately, this led Mr Howard into an uncomfortable cul-de-sac, where Tory politicians venture at their peril. By comparison to supplying arms to Saddam Hussein, and then organising a massive cover-up, Mr Howard's accusations all seemed rather tame.

The killer blow came when Mr Cook declared: "I have some sympathy for the hoo-ha gentleman..." As Mr Howard began to squirm, the Foreign Secretary said he was "enjoying the cross-examination", which was supposed to be his moment "on the rack". And if Mr Howard wanted to organise a repeat, he would be "very happy" to oblige.

— Steve Crawshaw

Joan of Arc portrait found

By John Lichfield

A PORTRAIT of a blonde teenage girl with striking blue eyes uncovered in a chapel in eastern France may be the only surviving likeness of Joan of Arc, the French peasant girl who led her nation to victory against the hated English 500 years ago.

The portrait was uncovered on the wall of a chapel in Domremy, in eastern France, Joan's birthplace.

Experts engaged by the French culture ministry are trying to establish whether the picture is a portrait of the young woman painted while she was still alive.

It was in Domremy that Joan - properly speaking Jeanne d'Arc - claimed to have heard the voice of God urging her to rally her countrymen against the English invader.

According to local tradition, she often prayed in the chapel where the picture was

found. It shows a young woman in characteristic peasant head-ware, kneeling besides a saint, Thiebaut de Provins.

The local bishop asserted last week that the picture was definitely Jeanne.

It was discovered when workmen restoring the church removed a layer of lime-wash spread on the walls during an outbreak of the bubonic plague in the 16th century.

The painting has been definitely dated to the early 15th

century, when Jeanne was alive. After inspiring a successful campaign against the English, she was betrayed by French enemies to the invaders, who burned her at the stake as a witch in 1431, at the age of 19.

Jeanne remains one of the great heroines of French history; her reputation has even survived energetic efforts by the far-right National Front to turn her into a symbol of ultra-nationalist resistance against foreigners.

Brits do their gritty bit at glitzy Cannes

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

ON THE beachfront, in the blazing sun, Emma Thompson was giving interviews, her American publicist resolutely keeping the troublesome British press at bay. Across the Croisette, at Planet Hollywood, the security men were practising their scowls as they prepared for John Travolta's party later this week.

And in the Palais des Festivals a warning was posted in the entrance hall for those out familiar with the world's most glamorous film festival. "We remind you that the tuxedo, black



Industry players in Cannes prepare for the festival

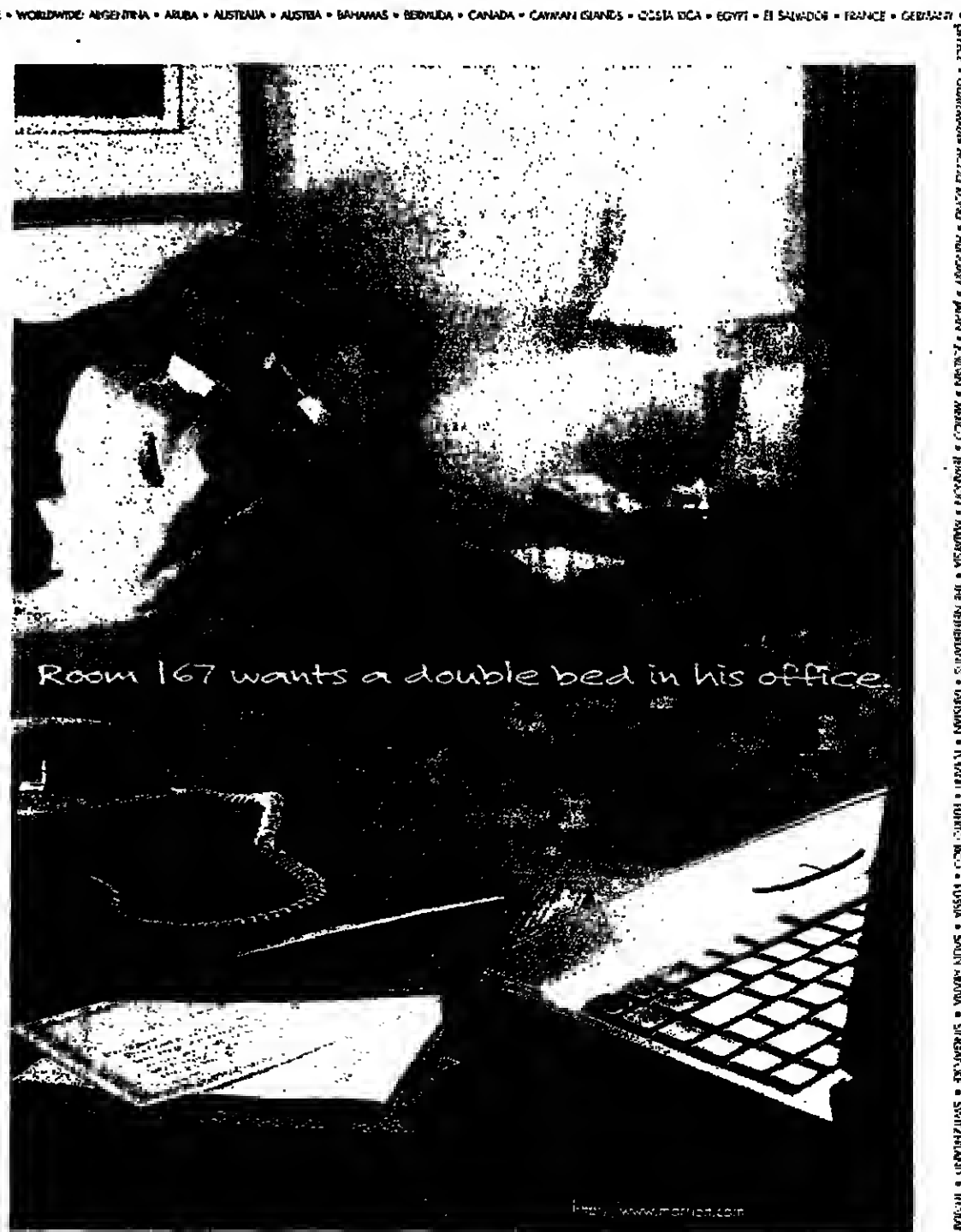
tie and city shoes are compulsory for Red Carpet events."

The Cannes Film Festival opens today in all its stylish indulgence. But climbing the red-carpeted steps to the Grand Théâtre Lumière with or without

out his city shoes in a couple of days' time will be the British director Ken Loach, a campaigner for Arthur Scargill's Socialist Party. His film *My Name Is Joe* is the only all-British movie competing for the

Palme d'Or. The film, shot in Glasgow with an all-Glaswegian cast, telling of an unemployed Glaswegian alcoholic who falls in love with a social worker, spearheads a move by the city to challenge the type and glamour of Cannes with a film about true Brit grit. The Glasgow Film Office will also be selling at the film market in Cannes *The Acid House*, a film based on short stories by Irvine Welsh, the author of *Trainspotting*.

But the talk of the opening day today will be Thompson and Travolta playing First Lady and President in *Primary Colors*, the opening film, which is based none too loosely on the Clintons.



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Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Claire Ward, the youngest female MP, at Westminster yesterday celebrating a £4.2m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a new building to house Britain's first national library for women
Photograph: Rui Xavier

Detectives in nanny inquiry fly to Australia

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

SCOTLAND YARD detectives are travelling to Australia to investigate the work record of Louise Sullivan, the nanny facing possible murder charges after a baby died in her care.

Police want to examine 18 "lines of inquiry" in connection with the 26-year-old Australian's previous childcare experience and claims that some of her qualifications are bogus.

Miss Sullivan is charged with causing grievous bodily harm to six-month-old Caroline Jorgen on 17 April. The baby allegedly suffered brain injuries while in the care of the nanny in London. A pathologist believes she

may have been shaken to death, although further tests are being carried out after earlier results were inconclusive. Miss Sullivan denies the charge.

Three senior detectives from the Metropolitan Police's north-west area Major Investigations Team are flying to Sydney tomorrow to investigate reports from Australia about Miss Sullivan's previous work experience as a nanny. It is understood they plan to interview past employers and visit her school and college to examine her qualifications. They want to carry out an eight day investigation in Sydney and its suburb of Manly. A police spokesman said: "Some interviews have already been arranged and we are liaising closely with the Australian police and authorities."

Miss Sullivan, who as part of her bail conditions has had to surrender her passport and stay in London, is due to appear in court on 8 June, when police have indicated that manslaughter

or possibly murder charges could be brought against her.

The nanny has also had to provide a £2,500 surety and promise not to contact Caroline's parents.

Caroline was pronounced dead at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children at 5pm on 22 April. She had been in a coma for five days after she was taken to hospital from the home of Dutch-born Marcel Jorgen, 41, and his French wife Muriel, 36, in Cricklewood, north-west London. At the opening of an inquest into the baby's death, Dr Freddie Patel, a pathologist, said that the injuries suggested "shaken baby syndrome", but added that a post mortem examination could not be conclusive until further tests had been completed. The inquest was adjourned to a later date.

Miss Sullivan's solicitor, Karen Todner, said yesterday her client had carried out a properly qualified course in Australia.

Children in hospital after E.coli outbreak

SIX children have been struck down with the *E.coli* O157 bacteria, health officials said yesterday. The youngsters, aged between two and nine, are understood to be friends from the Purbeck area of Dorset. They were all admitted to hospital over the weekend after suffering stomach upsets. Five are still in hospital, with one in a serious condition. The sixth child is being treated at home after being discharged from hospital.

Health officials have launched an investigation to trace the source of the outbreak. A spokeswoman for Dorset Health Authority said: "It looks like it is linked to a group of friends and the wider community is not at risk. Some of the children go to the same school, but we are not looking at the school as a source of the outbreak."

Dounreay stays closed

DOUNREAY, on the north coast of Scotland, has been ordered not to recommence nuclear processing in the wake of last week's power failure which raised fears of contamination.

The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, an arm of the Health and Safety Executive, confirmed it had suspended the operation. Management will not be allowed to restart processing until the electrical supply systems have been checked and the plant is safe. A Dounreay spokeswoman said the plant had arranged for an independent inspection of its electrical safety systems, which would take four weeks.

Mary Bell injunction granted

AN INJUNCTION was granted yesterday banning journalists, press photographers and photographers from going within half a mile of the home or school of Mary Bell's daughter and from filming or taking photographs of the child or her carers. Bell has been at the centre of press attention since it was revealed last month that she was paid for helping in the preparation of Gitta Sereny's book, *Cries Unheard*, about the two murders she committed in 1968 when aged 11.

Just the ticket for wardens

TRAFFIC wardens are to be given free passes to travel on buses and pounce on illegally-parked motorists. In a move thought to be the first of its kind, London Transport will issue the passes to wardens in more than half of all London boroughs. It is hoped the measure will keep buses moving freely on the capital's priority lanes, which are often blocked by parked vehicles.

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'Are Europe's politicians condemning women like me to death?'



Wendy Watson: 'If I had not had the mastectomy I would probably not be here'

Photograph: Raymonds

FIVE years ago this week Wendy Watson had both her breasts removed in a preventative mastectomy. At the time she was perfectly healthy with no signs of cancer, but nine members of her family had suffered with the disease, and six of them had died young, most of them under 50.

"I knew I had the gene for breast cancer, BRCA1, and that it was only a matter of time, so why wait until the cancer arrived? Better to have it right away without the need for chemotherapy," she said.

It was the first preventative mastectomy of its kind in the UK, and five years on Mrs Watson, now 43 - the same age at which her mother died - has never felt better and there is no sign of the disease.

She is happy with her own health, but angry that in future women may be denied tests for the gene which would be one of the many covered by yesterday's European Parliament decision on genetic patenting, which will allow companies to claim fees and royalties for the use of tests which they have developed.

Myriad Genetics, of Salt Lake City in the United States, which has already applied to patent the BRCA1 gene in Europe, at present charges about \$2,400 (£1,472) for the test in the US.

"I have the gene and there is no doubt

Gene-patenting could deny the terminally ill the right to a cure.

Roger Dobson reports

that if I had not had the mastectomy I would probably not be here today. My mum died at 43, my cousin at 38, and others at similar ages," said Mrs Watson who led a campaign against patenting of genetic tests and who a year ago launched the Hereditary Breast Cancer helpline.

She became aware of a likely genetic link when she was 16 and her mother died. Her grandmother had also had breast cancer twice, and had died of ovarian cancer, a malignancy in which the BRCA1 gene is also implicated. When she moved to the Peak District eight years ago, she found more family members with the disease.

"I didn't know much about genes at the time, but it was blindingly obvious to me that it was hereditary. I went to doctors to see what courses of action were open to me and they all talked about catching it early. It occurred to me that the only sure way was to rid of the at-risk tissue before

the cancer came. I think everyone at the time thought I was being too drastic, even irrational, but I knew it wasn't drastic. My only objective was to stay alive and to me dying was the drastic bit, not what I was going to have done," Mrs Watson said.

"Everyone should have the right to have a genetic test and take whatever action is necessary to save their lives. By allowing companies to patent things like this and charge for them, we will in effect be denying some people the right to a cure."

Although no figures are available, it is estimated that at least 100 women a year in Britain now opt to have a preventative mastectomy because of extensive family history or as a result of positive genetic testing.

Britain's leading geneticists have warned the Government that gene-patenting will cost the NHS millions of pounds in royalties, mostly to American biotech companies.

But Bill Hockett, director of corporate affairs for Myriad Genetics, said: "The gene would probably not have been discovered but for the potential of patenting. Without the protection that the patent affords, a company could not invest hundreds of millions of dollars in getting it to the market place."

■ Hereditary Breast Cancer helpline: 01629 813000.

Call for reform of 'shambolic' asylum system

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

A JUMBO JET full of failed asylum-seekers will be deported every day from Britain unless radical steps are taken to strengthen the asylum system, the immigration minister said yesterday.

Mike O'Brien told the Home Affairs Select Committee that up to 110,000 asylum-seekers "would be due in some way for removal from the United Kingdom" by 2002 if numbers of applicants continued to rise and the present slow system of processing claims and removals was not radically reformed. "That's a 747 [aircraft] a day, which is clearly a very big problem."

He said the system was in such a "shambles" that 17,000 asylum-seekers had already "gone to ground" and were out of contact with immigration department officials.

But Mr O'Brien was forced to deny that his officials pursued a "culture of rejection" as he was questioned by Marsha Singh, the Labour MP for Bradford West. Mr Singh said two members of his family had been refused permission to come to Britain for a family wedding despite his assurance as an MP that they would return.

Mr O'Brien said officers deciding such applications often required "the wisdom of

Solomon, and some of them are not Solomon. Some of them with the best will in the world will get things wrong."

Mr O'Brien refused to back down when told that people had been refused entry because officials did not believe their claims to belong to families with rights to live here. Mr Singh said DNA tests had subsequently shown that many of those refused had been telling the truth.

Earlier Mr O'Brien was at pains to stress that he did not wish to pursue an asylum policy that could be perceived as racist. He said that account should be taken of the benefits which immigrants brought to Britain, and genuine refugees should receive a favourable hearing.

The minister said the Government was seeking to improve the asylum system by reducing the two-stage appeal process to a single stage. Britain will also lobby other EU states later this month for reform of the Dublin Convention, which requires refugees to seek asylum in the first state in which they arrive, but is being widely flouted.

Mr O'Brien told MPs that there were 19,500 asylum claimants whose appeals have been exhausted and are waiting to be sent home. Another 23,000 were awaiting decisions on their appeals, while 51,000 were awaiting an initial ruling.

Poor management blamed for Ashworth failures

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

A "LITANY of murder, attempted murder, pornography and paedophile activity" in Ashworth special hospital could have been avoided, an inquiry heard yesterday.

Poor leadership and management lay behind many of the problems at the hospital which houses some of Britain's most dangerous psychiatric patients, said David Preece, of the Prison Officers' Association.

"The majority of it could have been prevented through greater consultation and involvement with the staff - the staff that do the job," he claimed.

Mr Preece, POA branch chairman since 1993, was giving evidence at the public inquiry into the running of the Personality Disorder Unit at Ashworth. The inquiry was ordered in January 1997 by former secretary of state for health, Stephen Dorrell, after allegations of paedophilia, pornography and drug use on the unit.

Mr Preece said that Ashworth had not improved since the previous Blom-Cooper inquiry. "There have been major improvements, but there are still major problems," he said.

Pornography, and drug and alcohol misuse were not con-

fined to the wards of the PDU. Similar allegations had been made among the mental health patients, he said.

The inquiry was told earlier that police investigated concerns over patients establishing contact with a paedophile ring operating outside the hospital.

Michael Bateson, a principal social worker at Ashworth since July 1995, spoke of fears that alleged paedophile activity "might be widening".

Mr Bateson said staff were aware that a former patient - the father of the girl, known as Child A, at the centre of the paedophilia allegations - was still in contact with former patients.

Mr Bateson said he first learned of the allegations arising from Child A's visits to paedophiles on the PDU's Lawrence Ward in October, 1996. Later he was ordered to oversee an investigation into her contact with the patients by the then chief executive Janice Miles. Mr Bateson said he saw no benefit for Child A in visiting the PDU.

Mr Bateson told how he contacted a social services department for further information on the child and said the authorities allowed the girl to continue living with her father, despite being aware of details of his previous convictions, including one for attempted rape.

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Prisoners talk their way out of drug problems

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

MURDERERS, robbers and drug-dealers. They might not seem the most obvious counsellors for those wanting to open their hearts about the problems of their formative years.

Yet some of the most hardened, drug-dependent inmates

in HMP Coldingley have found that by confiding their darkest secrets in each other they have been able to see their way to a brighter future.

For those accustomed to an environment where any signals of weakness are seized upon and ruthlessly exploited, the idea of group therapy is a culture shock which, in their words, "takes a lot of bottle".

Trevor, who is in the eighth year of a life sentence for a drug-related murder, said: "It has helped me get in touch with who I am; my feelings, my emotions and why I turned to drugs in the first place."

"I've discovered so much about myself personally." His enthusiasm for the programme - run by the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust (RAPt) - is all the greater for having approached it with deep

cynicism. He had already tried other drug-rehabilitation courses in other jails and failed them. "It was learning from textbooks and being talked to by people who didn't know how I was feeling," he explained.

"Here even the counsellors have had experiences. It helps to know that I am talking to fellow addicts."

Almost all RAPt staff have experienced drug problems and prisoners who have passed

through the programme often stay on as "peer supporters" to help fellow inmates. Partly thanks to the RAPt scheme, Coldingley prison has reduced the number of inmates testing positive for drugs from 40 per cent to 15 per cent in the space of a year. The number testing positive for opiates has fallen from 3.8 per cent to 2.6 per cent in the same period.

It is a sign of hope after widely expressed fears that drug use had become so rife in Britain's jails that even prisoners who began their sentences without an addiction would have one by the time they were released. Yesterday the Government announced the new Prison Service Drugs Strategy with the promise that treatment programmes would be greatly expanded.

Richard Tilt, director-general of the Prison Service, conceded that he was dependent on the Government's comprehensive spending review, which will be completed later this summer, for the money to allow the programmes to be set up.

Adam Sampson, chief executive of RAPt, said at least £10m a year on top of the current annual spend of £7m was needed to set up the necessary new schemes.

He said: "Unless government supports these fine words with some hard cash, their good intentions will all be wasted."

As the Minister of the estate, George Howarth, the drugs minister, said that a decision to reduce punishments for the use of cannabis in prison was not a signal that the Government condoned the use of soft drugs.

He said the measure, which was revealed in *The Independent*

Neal and Dean, who are 'peer supporters', prisoners who have passed the programme and often stay to help fellow inmates Photograph: Tom Pacion

last weekend, brought the penalties for cannabis use in jails into line with those applied to the wider public. "I am not suggesting here that we condone the use of certain drugs but that we pay particular attention to those drugs that cause the most damage," he said.

John Smith, the governor at Coldingley, said he was trying to bring about a cultural change in the prison. "A few years ago, newly admitted prisoners were expected to use drugs and it was not all right for them to say they didn't take them," he said.

"There is a real push in this regime to provide a positive culture based on individual responsibility, hard work and leading to a useful life on release."

The change has enabled the Surrey jail to reduce its level of mandatory drug tests and concentrate on a voluntary scheme in which nearly all inmates take part to show they are drug-free. This enables the jail to focus more intently on those who are not.

By confiding their darkest secrets they have seen the way to a brighter future

The success of the RAPt scheme, a 12-week programme based on the principles of Narcotics Anonymous, demanding total abstinence from drugs while providing a full daily routine, is based on its interaction with other drug programmes inside the jail.

The Acorn project runs an outreach service where drug advice workers operate as if they were in the outside world, helping to ensure that RAPt graduates do not relapse.

More open-minded prisoners are encouraged to participate in complementary medicine, including acupuncture and cranial osteopathy, to address their anger and develop their self-awareness.

All of which seems to have helped reduce tension within the jail. In the time that positive drug tests have plummeted, the number of disciplinary incidents in the prison has fallen by 60 per cent.



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DAILY POEM

Roundhouse

By John Kinsella

Built in 1830/31 on the headland on the south side of the Swan River mouth, the Roundhouse was Western Australia's first gaol.

*Windscale on a pitted cenotaph collects
In the seascroll, the script, the brocade
Of a foaming, spreading hand - shoabwaters*

*Where the polished caprock tightens the little
Space - though the sky expands amongst
The mental rigging, adhering itself to a calenture -*

*Deep green, the sooty terns rock on the lip
And then flip back into oblivion. Windscale
In its sharp climb should incite an angrier sea:*

*The barebone, the spit's jawjut, the anchorage
Of rock and shore, aspirations for games
On the sky's field of play - cenotaph - muddy...*

This week's poems celebrate the work of John Kinsella, who was born in Perth, Western Australia, in 1963, and mark the simultaneous publication of his *Poems 1980-1994* (Bloodaxe, £9.95) and his new volume, *The Hunt* (Bloodaxe, £7.95). This poem first appeared in *Full Rathom Five* (1993).

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to find out why.

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Representatives from Canada's first nations conduct a traditional blessing ceremony on the steps of the newly restored Canada House in Trafalgar Square. Photograph: David Rose

Warring council leaders offered marriage guidance counselling

By Diana Blamires

TWO warring bosses at a flagship Labour council were offered 'marriage guidance' counselling as a way to help them get on.

But the offer to go to ACAS, the Government's conciliation service, was turned down by Amanda Kelly, deputy chief executive of Camdeo Council, north London, an industrial tribunal heard yesterday. Instead, she demanded an apology from chief executive Steve Bundred before she would return to work.

Ms Kelly, 41, claiming sexual discrimination, alleges that she was bullied by Mr Bundred and threatened with the sack while male officials were treated more leniently.

The hearing was told that Richard Arthur, a councillor, stepped into this dispute after a breakdown between the two highest paid members of the council.

Ms Kelly had gone on sick leave with stress and back pain following a bitter exchange of letters in which she said Mr Bundred, 46, had treated her like "a naughty schoolgirl".

She said women were surrounded by an aggressive male culture at the council and a complaint three years before that she was groped by an official during a weekend conference was not treated seriously.

Mr Arthur wrote to Ms Kelly, a solicitor, suggesting that a woman counsellor at ACAS might help both sides work it out.

Ms Kelly, a mother of two, referred to the letter as cynical and containing a number of unacceptable suggestions.

She said "Suggesting a 'marriage guidance' process between me and Steve - it appeared to me to be totally dismissing the contents of the letters."

She wrote back through her

solicitor demanding an apology from Mr Bundred, a one-off payment of £5,000 and to be made head of her own department.

The council wrote back turning down her suggestions but offering to make her head of Leisure Resources.

Ms Kelly complained that she was not given enough corporate responsibility.

Mr Bundred had questioned her judgment and she had been asked by him why she had sacked a female employee at a disciplinary hearing.

Male colleagues were not treated in the same way and she had felt bullied by her boss.

She said the head of a department was allowed to leave with a six months' pay-off after one of his staff was arrested for serious fraud which he had not detected.

"It seems he was given a nice easy way out of the council despite a huge fraud being perpetrated," she told the hearing.

In her case, she claimed she was threatened with dismissal "on the basis of matters I have still to understand".

She said: "The men are either being paid off or have no action taken, and I have been treated completely differently."

Ms Kelly said it had also been suggested that she be "re-energised" by being seconded to another authority, perhaps a government department to draft legislation. She condemned this as being a Victorian solution.

She said: "A friend of mine likened it to trying to huddle an unmarried daughter off to an asylum after she became pregnant."

Camden and Mr Bundred deny sexual discrimination.

The two executives are working together pending the results of the hearing. The tribunal was adjourned until tomorrow.

Mother sues over baby 'blunder'

By Kate Watson-Smyth

£1m claim over surgery after foetus incorrectly pronounced dead

A BUSINESSWOMAN who had surgery after doctors wrongly diagnosed that her baby had died in the womb sobbed as she told the High Court she was incapable of doing her job properly after the operation.

Suzi Hagstrom, 39, an American marketing director, broke down as she told the court she collapsed three times, was unable to concentrate and had pain in her abdomen after the surgery in 1993. She resigned in December 1994 and claims she has been unable to work since. She is claiming £1m compensation from the hospital. The court heard that while visiting her mother in Britain in 1993,

Mrs Hagstrom had an ultrasound examination and was told there was no foetal heartbeat. During an operation to remove the foetus, her uterus and bowel were perforated and she needed surgery. Eleven days later she had a second ultrasound at Royal Surrey County Hospital and was told her child was alive.

British-born Mrs Hagstrom, who also has an eight-year-old daughter, Danielle, gave birth to an apparently healthy baby, Christen Rose - a derivation of Christ Has Risen - in March 1994. But she was terrified her child would have problems as a result of the surgery. After returning

to work in June 1994 with a Californian company, she said she was angry, emotionally drained and cried at work. "I was extremely distressed. I could not concentrate at work or in meetings, whereas before I was extremely detail-oriented. Nothing was in my brain - it was as if it had shut down," she said.

Mrs Hagstrom saw a counsellor at the instigation of her mother, but said she refused to discuss the operation. "I hated the thought of psychiatrists, doctors and anything to do with the medical profession. I did not want to talk about the trauma."

Cross-examining, Sally Smith QC

for the hospital, said Mrs Hagstrom was simply overloaded with the pressures of work and two small children. But Mrs Hagstrom said: "The workload was just about the same but my ability to handle it had changed."

On 14 September she collapsed at work and was taken to hospital, where a doctor noted she was under great stress at work. She took two weeks off but shortly after returning she collapsed again. "I had numerous tests and everything came out negative and I wanted a magic pill that would make everything go back to normal," she said. The following month she resigned, which she said

was "entirely my decision. Work had become overwhelmingly difficult for me. I thought I was going mad ...

I had constant and recurrent thoughts about the hospital and nightmares about Christen," she said. After giving up work, Mrs Hagstrom said her symptoms worsened and she was unable to do anything but sleep during the day. She continued with psychiatric counselling. The judge is to assess the amount of damages to be awarded.

The Royal Surrey County and St Luke's Hospital NHS Trust has admitted negligence but disputes whether her continuing difficulties stem from the medical treatment she received in August 1993.

The case continues.

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Prescott plays for time over union deal

By Colin Brown and
Barrie Clement

THE Deputy Prime Minister intervened last night to try to get the TUC and the CBI to reach agreement over trade-union recognition.

John Prescott is understood to have called for more time to be given to the two sides to see if they could strike a deal, even if it means delaying a Cabinet decision.

The Deputy Prime Minister was furious over a report that an agreement had been reached between Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, and Tony Blair that 40 per cent of any workforce would have to back recognition before it was granted, not just a majority of those voting in a ballot.

With the unions offering a compromise of 30 per cent, Mr Prescott was keen to see more time being given to try to get the two sides to reach an accommodation. Given his close association with the unions, Mr Prescott is anxious that the Blair Government is not accused of overriding the views of the TUC. "It's an important issue for him," said a source at Westminster. The Prime Minister's spokesman said the meeting with Mrs Beckett was one of a series and there would be more individually and collectively, before agreement was reached.

Meanwhile, Tony Blair told the TUC leadership that while the publication of a white paper on "fairness at work" was imminent, key decisions on union recognition remained to be taken. Despite attempts to calm speculation, union leaders insisted they had been informed by ministerial sources that the Government was hell-bent on introducing a law which would

present substantial hurdles to collective-bargaining rights.

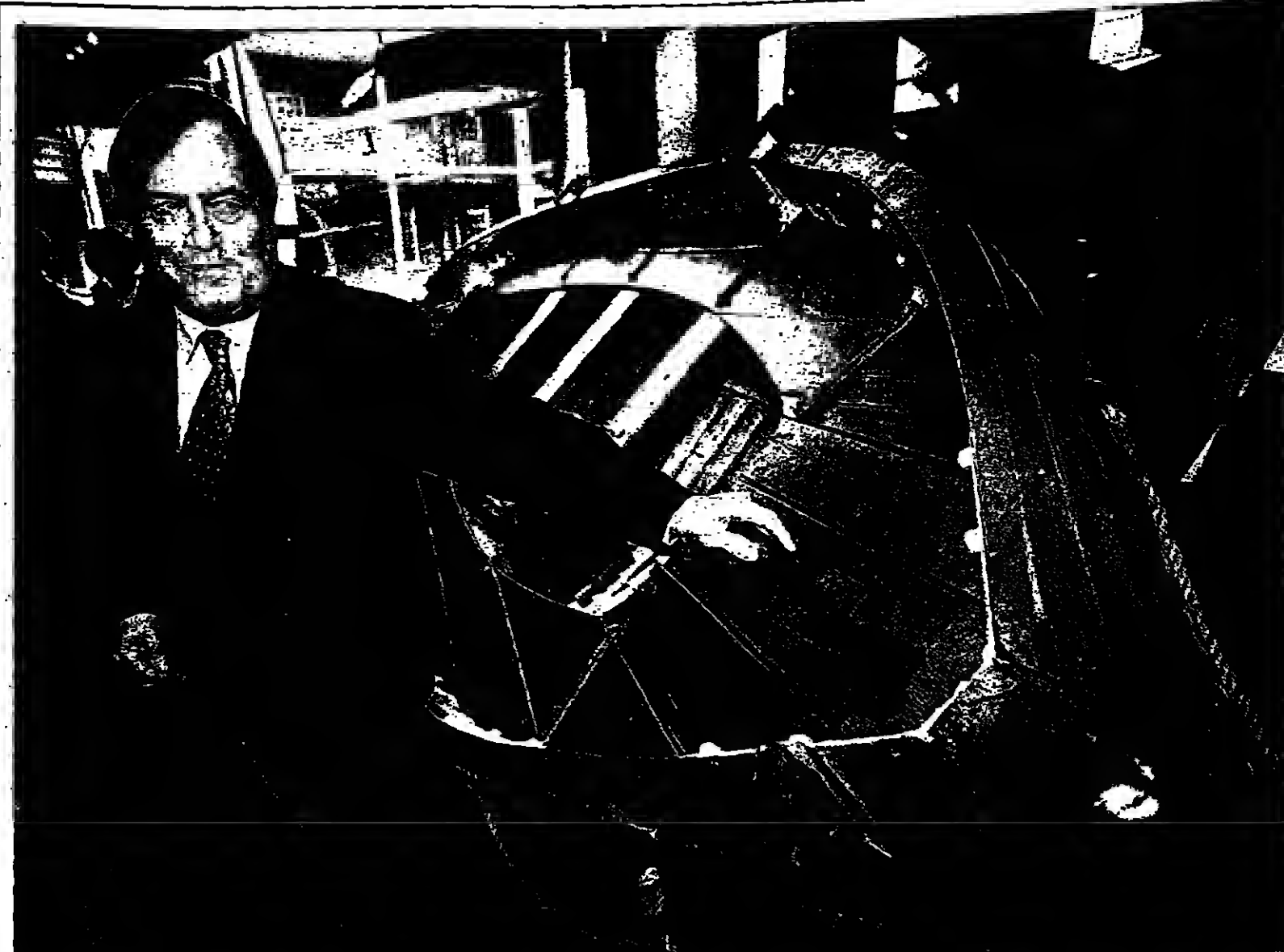
Downing Street denied ministers had already opted for the 40 per cent formula, although senior union figures believe that such a proposal will be part of the White Paper.

Following the meeting yesterday with John Monks, the TUC general secretary, the Prime Minister met representatives of the CBI which originally wanted more than half of a workforce to endorse recognition, but has apparently accepted the 40 per cent proportion.

The flurry of activity in Downing Street means the proposals could be presented to the Cabinet tomorrow with a view to publishing the white paper next week. Some slippage looked increasingly likely last night however after the intervention of Mr Prescott.

Ian Davidson, secretary of the trade union group of MPs, said he was unable to identify anyone in the Parliamentary Labour Party who backed the 40 per cent formula. "We think the Government should be sticking to its manifesto commitment. It shouldn't be doing favours for the CBI," he said. A 100-strong meeting of the group yesterday decided that while they would avoid confrontation, they would not "lie down" and acquiesce over decisions with which they disagreed.

Trade unionists who harboured doubts that the Government had any intention of introducing a law on recognition, were cheered by a comment from the Prime Minister's spokesman who said the Government would be fulfilling its manifesto pledge. That in itself would be a "big step", the spokesman said.



The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, a former merchant seaman, admires the jollyboat from the SS Anglo-Saxon, sunk in the Atlantic by a German raider. The jollyboat is the centrepiece of a new Merchant Navy exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

FO rebuked over frauds in Jordan

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

SIR JOHN KERR, head of the Diplomatic Service, received a stinging rebuke from the Commons Public Accounts Committee last night.

In a report on a scandalous breakdown of financial controls at the British embassy in Amman, Jordan, in which the British taxpayer was fleeced of more than £109,000 by a local accountant, it was revealed that the Foreign Office official who doled out the cash was paid a £31,600 bonus when he was compulsorily retired last September.

The cross-party committee

condemned that outcome as "indefensible", and demanded immediate and tough action to change the cosy culture of a Diplomatic Service that appeared "to regard financial management as a second-order activity".

The committee also reacted with shocked outrage to a question put to them by Sir John, in a hearing last February, when he had sought their advice "as to whether the restitution of sums improperly gained might be pursued in exchange for less punitive criminal charges".

Last night's report said: "We are surprised that the department should consider there is an issue here. These are not

matters for compromise or for deals.

"Those who defraud the public purse should be subject to the full rigour of criminal justice and should not be encouraged to think that this might be ameliorated if they were to repay the money obtained improperly. Departments should pursue both criminal charges and the restitution of their losses."

The £109,000 fraud followed another Amman embassy scam in which another local accountant misappropriated £233,000 in fraudulent claims for dead pensioners.

Sir John told the committee that it was "a shaming occur-

rence" for the Foreign Office that two such frauds should take place, one after the other, in two adjoining rooms in the Amman embassy.

But he said that while the Foreign Office had considered sacking the Senior Management Officer who had been duped in the most recent fraud, compulsory retirement had been deemed the best course.

Similarly, the diplomats who had been responsible for that unnamed official's slackness - including the ambassador - had all retired by the time that fraud had come to light last year.

If the Senior Management Officer had retired, normally, at the age of 60, in 2001, the MPs

were told, he would have received a lump sum worth only £43,300 - £31,600 less than the amount he was awarded last year. He also receives a pension of £14,436.50 a year.

David Davis, the former Conservative Minister who chairs the committee, said last night: "It is frankly incredible that financial controls should have failed twice in the same embassy... The taxpayer should not lose out again."

"Staff responsible for checking local spending must do the job properly and should know that negligence in these important matters will be subject to very rigorous disciplinary action."

Minister in fight for his career

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

ONE OF Tony Blair's least-known Cabinet ministers yesterday bared his soul to a select committee of MPs over a whispering campaign around Whitehall that he will be sacked in the next reshuffle.

David Clark attacked the rumours of his imminent sacking as "tittle tattle" and he put up a powerful fight for his Cabinet career with an end-of-term report to MPs, which may be seen as his swansong.

He got the backing of a group of Labour MPs who tabled a Commons motion urging Mr Blair to change his obscure title from Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to minister for public service, rather than sack him.

But it turned into a double-edged sword as one of the MPs who praised him, Peter Bradley, went on to say that in his constituency of the Wrekin, none of 50 constituents he had questioned knew what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was supposed to do.

While other Cabinet ministers have made serious gaffes, the MPs believe Mr Clark's only failure is his modesty. Mr Bradley, a member of the committee, told Mr Clark: "You talk about a quiet revolution. I would like the volume turned up."

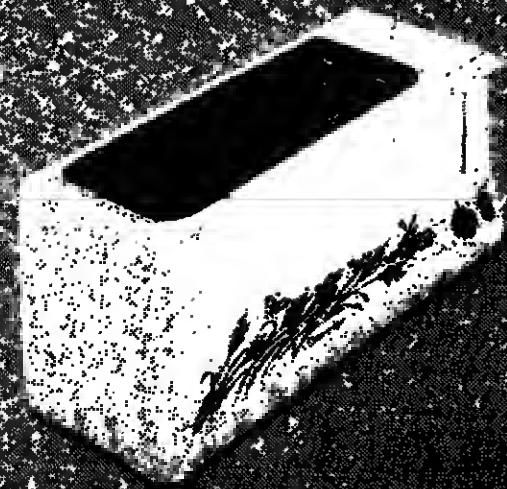
But Mr Clark made it clear he did not want to change his quiet style. "There is a pretty quiet revolution going on within the department but it has got to be done in a quiet way."

Mr Clark's changes to public service include:

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- Allowing benefit claimants to have their money paid into Post Office savings accounts by electronic means.
- A Freedom of Information Bill, which he promises to publish before the summer recess.

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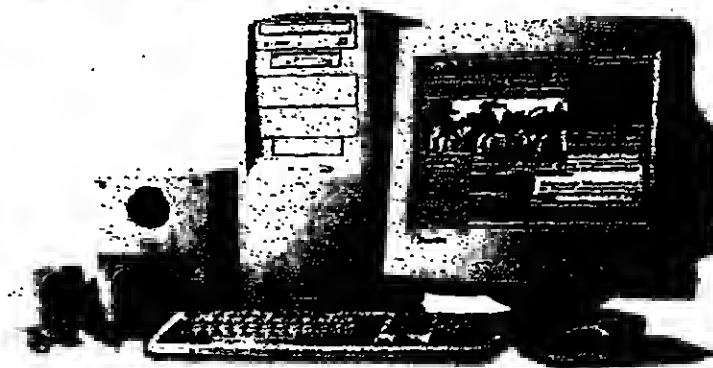
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US firm in line to run schools for profit

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

AN AMERICAN company which runs schools for profit is holding discussions with the Government about taking over failing schools in Britain.

Leaders of the Edison Project have also held exploratory talks with officials at the Department for Education about how a profit-making company might run schools in education action zones which will aim to raise standards in poor areas.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, has said that on company will be able to run an action zone for profit but he hopes businesses will be involved.

Benno C Schmidt, Edison's chairman and a former Yale president, in London last night to deliver a lecture at the Institute of Economic Affairs, described the attitude of officials to the idea as "on the whole, pragmatic".

He said: "The Government has asked us about the sort of profits we would want to make. I have been clear that we have no problem with the idea that we should not make excessive and unreasonable profit."

"We would be very happy to take part in a system where there were ceilings and caps on levels of profitability but we can't be locked into an inflexible budget. They have not said that making a profit would rule us out."

He pointed out that his company had provided much-needed investment in the 25

schools which it runs in eight American states, on contract to school districts, the equivalent of local education authorities.

Standards were rising and the project expected a commercial return by using public money more efficiently, he added. Fifteen more schools will be set up from the autumn.

Edison has had half a dozen meetings with government officials and more are scheduled. It has expressed interest in two bids for action zones from Thameside and Surrey.

Mr Schmidt said the Government had also raised the prospect of Edison taking over failing schools. "Officials have suggested this might well be legal, possibly working with local education authorities."

They wanted to be sure, he added, that the interests of children would not be sacrificed.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "I hope that officials at the Department for Education have kept their ministers informed. We have a clear commitment from the Secretary of State that organisations will not be allowed to run schools for profit in this country."

"If taxpayers' cash has been set aside for the education of children it should not be made available for commercial profit."

A Department for Education and Employment spokesman said: "No commitments have been made to any organisation. But we are always interested in new ideas from public and private sector organisations."



Cornelia Parker's *Matter & What It Means*, part of a new exhibition of the sculptor's work at the Serpentine Gallery in London. Photograph: Rui Xavier

ITV sets up the sitcom 'Babes'

By Janine Gibson

THE ITV Network Centre has commissioned its first Christmas sitcom special, following criticism last week of its failure to develop good new comedy.

The BBC traditionally wipes the floor with ITV over the Christmas holiday period with specials of sitcom favourites such as *Only Fools and Horses*, *Men Behaving Badly* and *One Foot in the Grave*, but ITV will fight back this year with a new British comedy.

Unusually, the series chosen to fight the Yuletide battle hasn't yet been seen. It is still in production, and won't be broadcast until July. However, David Liddiment, ITV's director of programmes, is so confident of the show, he has pushed through plans to produce a high-profile Christmas special.

Described as "the British *Friends*", *Babes in the Wood* stars Samantha Janus, *The Big Breakfast*'s Denise Van Outen and the newcomer Natalie Walters, as flatmates in St John's Wood. Karl Howman, a sitcom regular from the BBC's Eighties series *Brush Strokes*, plays their neighbour.

The sitcom's writer, Geoff Deane - a veteran of hits including *Birds of a Feather* - said that *Babes in the Wood* will be "the best new ITV sitcom since *Rising Damp*". Deane would not disclose details of his festive special, but said there would be plenty of surprises.

The programme was commissioned after a stern warning to ITV last week by the industry regulator, the Independent Television Commission, which issues broadcasting licences to ITV companies. The ITC concluded last week in its annual performance review of ITV that the channel had "failed to develop good new comedy".

Summit bid salvaged from the storm

ALL SMILES at Base Camp this afternoon. Nima Dorjee and Pemba Tsering returned from the mountain after a night huddled in a collapsed tent with all their fingers intact and a more optimistic prognosis of our team's chances of still mounting a summit bid.

They spent most of the day gathering smashed tents and other gear, scattered over hundreds of metres of broken rock and glacier in the Western Cwm when 100mph winds tore Camp 2 apart early on Monday. All our high-altitude clothing was in the small tents hit by the storm.



Base Camp

Without those down jackets, salopettes and heavy-duty gloves we would be unable to withstand the bitter sub-zero temperatures higher up Everest.

We still do not know the full

picture. But if, as it sounds from Nima and Pemba, nearly all our Himalayan Kingdoms Expeditions tents are still there, though broken, most of the gear should still be inside them. Unfortunately they were unable to find one of the tents used by two Sherpas and their gear and participation is vital to our effort. A summit bid will probably depend on how much equipment we can muster between us.

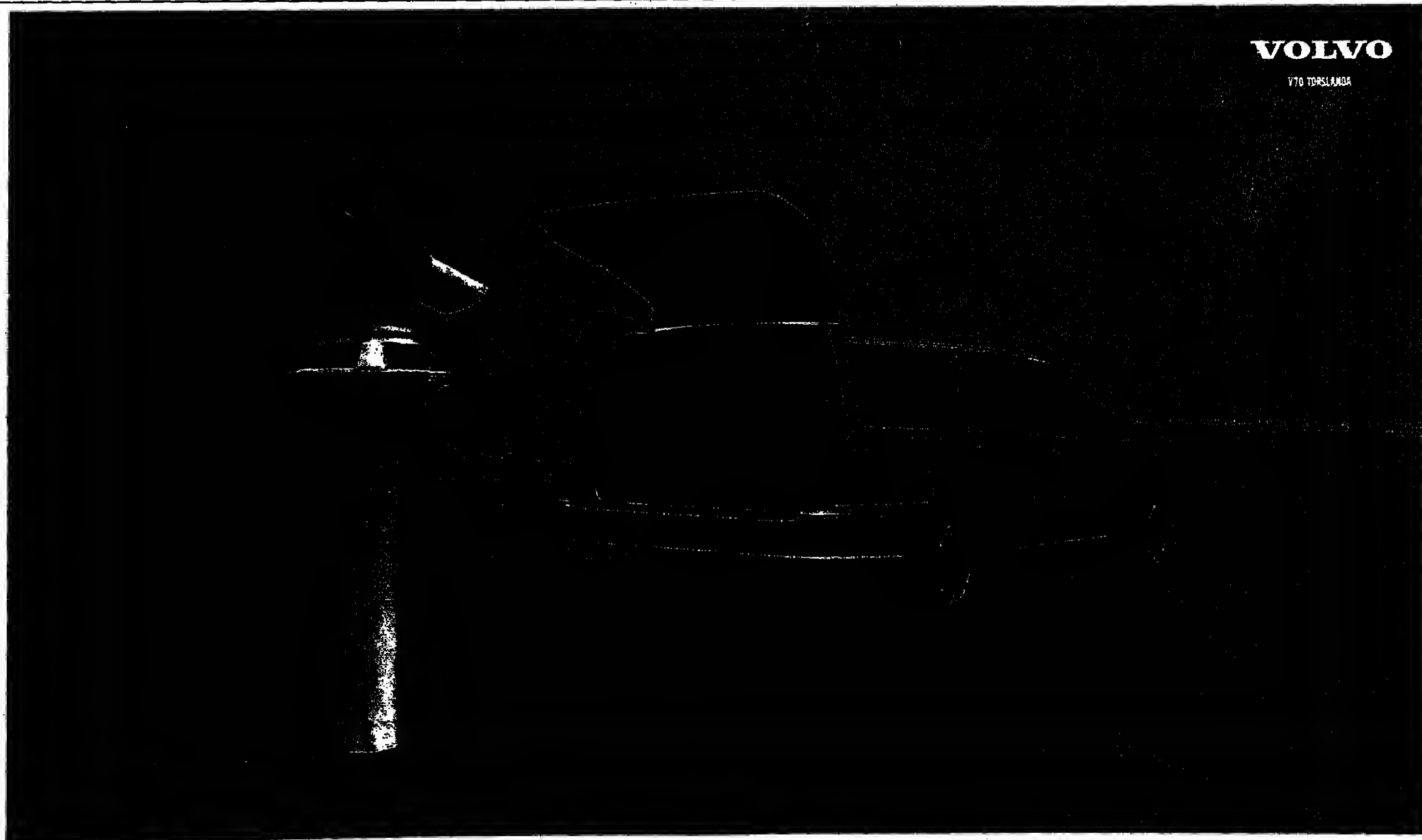
Nima and Pemba told their tale with typical Sherpa insouciance. Both are experienced climbing Sherpas, spending part of each year expeditioning and

the rest with their families. Nima, 32, short and with his face nearly always split by a grin or laughter comes from the Arun valley area away to the east. Pemba, 42, is from Khari Khola to the south of the Khumbu.

Their hands had frozen as they struggled in the storm, disentangling broken tent poles and piling rocks on top of the collapsed tents to stop them taking off again. Back at Camp 2, they sheltered in our large, but broken, blue dome tent, thawing their hands out in warm salt water before eating and settling down for an uncomfortable night.

We have muddled over the latest weather forecast from the Met Office in Bracknell. It does not look good enough for a summit bid over the next week but should allow some of us to go up to Camp 2 and try and restore some order. All being well, four of us, including myself, will head up tomorrow and spend one night there.

Beyond that, it looks like another sojourn at Base Camp hoping for that elusive weather window. It is worth bearing in mind that the first ascensionists, Hillary and Tensing, did not reach the top until 29 May.



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The day the dream of 1968 died

Thirty years ago students and workers united on the streets of France. John Lichfield assesses their legacy

THIRTY years ago today, France stood on the brink of revolution: or so it seemed.

A student rebellion had been raging for 10 days, without disturbing the peace of the greater part of France. On 13 May 1968, the workers – the word was still current three decades ago – came on to the streets.

The two largest trade union federations called a one-day general strike; there was an impressively large students-and-workers march in Paris. A stream of strikes and sit-ins followed, starting in the great Renault factory on an island in the Seine at Boulogne Billancourt (now an abandoned shell), followed by stoppages by railwaymen, miners, steel-workers ... It appeared to some commentators, even to the CIA, that true revolution had come.

The participation of "real workers" is one of the factors which distinguishes the Paris spring of 1968 from the other

youth-led disturbances of the late 1960s. Revolutionaries in Britain and elsewhere were green with envy. The idea that Ford workers in Dagenham might strike in sympathy with British student protesters was ludicrous.

Three decades later, such a prospect is equally unthinkable in France. The May revolution seemed, briefly, like the apotheosis of the great Left Bank dream of intellectual-and-worker solidarity. In truth, the day the workers joined in was the beginning of the end. The unions had a series of specific demands which could be settled and were (a 10 per cent pay increase; extended union rights). After that, the whole movement rapidly deflated. The French intellectuals and the mass of French workers rarely fought on the same side again (though both voted for François Mitterrand in 1981).

The French working class, pocketing the gains they won in

May 1968, moved into the bourgeois, consumerist society which the student rebellion had, theoretically, wanted to dismantle. The "moral" and intellectual Left lost patience with a working class which failed to live up to its allotted, revolutionary role.

The social unrest which accompanied the collapse of French heavy industry in the 1970s and 1980s left the intellectuals cold. Instead, the moral Left found surrogate proletariats elsewhere: in the Third World and, most recently, in il-

legal immigrants. The sanctification of the "sans papiers" – illegal migrants – in the last 18 months is the most obvious symbol of the present gulf of understanding between ordinary people and the French artistic and intellectual elite (many of them former *soixante-huitards*, children of 68).

There were large demonstrations in Paris and other cities last year, led by cinema directors, writers and actors against relatively modest moves to control illegal immigrants. Such a policy, continued with only minor ad-

justments by the present Socialist-led government, is hugely popular with the working classes and lower middle classes – and with legal immigrants.

In truth, the students and workers had similarly differing ambitions 30 years ago. The May '68 rebellion was two rebellions which rarely met. Both were powered by intense irritation with the paternalistic, hierarchical – but successful – France which had recovered from the Second World War.

However, the student rebellion was always more

cultural and spiritual, than truly political or economic. It began with the frustration, literally, of male French students, locked out of women's halls of residence at Nanterre University.

The best-remembered student slogans of the day were hedonistic, anarchistic, sexually horny, utopian. "Be realistic, demand the impossible"; "Your desires are the true reality"; "Live, without boredom"; "It is forbidden to forbid"; "The more I make revolution, the more I want to make love".

There were also idealists and revolutionaries among the workers, especially at the Renault factory, which refused at first to obey its leaders' recommendation to return to work. But, on union orders, most factories refused to let the students in.

The union bosses saw in May '68 an opportunity to win some of the fruits of an economic boom already two decades old – the most prolonged period of rising prosperity in French history. The settlement of the industrial component of the revolt was negotiated amongst others by an ambitious young politician called Jacques Chirac (then employment minister). It extended some of the post-war prosperity to blue-collar workers, producing steep inflation but also a spending boom which powered the economy through the first half of the 1970s.

Union leaders' hopes of winning a permanently strong place

in French society have proved as simplistic as student leaders' hopes of cultural revolution. In 1968, one in four employed people in France was unionised; 30 years later, the figure is one in 10.

Other statistics suggest the Left did triumph, in a sense. The real winner in the next 30 years was a form of bureaucratic, welfare socialism. Over-taxed France and the over-manned state which even the present Socialist-led government is sworn to change, owes its origins in part to 1968. In the 12 years after the revolt, welfare spending rose by 10 per cent of GNP; the annual hiring of state employees increased by one-third. By the end of the 1970s, unemployment was also rising to its present steep level (3,000,000, compared to 200,000 in 1968). But the pain of high joblessness – felt mostly by the working class until recently – has left the former '68 students, and their intellectual successors, relatively unmoved.



Women (left) in Paris last year demonstrating against a crackdown on illegal immigration; and (above) riots in Paris in May 1968 when students barred access to the Boulevard Saint-Michel



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Yeltsin's words go missing on the Net

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

WITH a team of advisers on hand to correct any gaffes and to edit his lengthy replies, Boris Yeltsin made his first public appearance in cyberspace yesterday – and even in this spin doctor's paradise – became the focus of a strange controversy.

Following in the footsteps of a diverse crowd of celebrities – from Mikhail Gorbachev and Tony Blair to the disgraced Los Angeles detective Mark Fuhrman – the Russian president spent half an hour as the on-line guest of the US cable company MSNBC in an event that was, absurdly, termed a "chat".

His performance, billed by one Moscow Internet provider as "the coolest site of the day", was enthusiastically anticipated in his vast home country, where

it featured prominently on television news bulletins all day. In remarks that raise as many concerns as they lay to rest, his on-line audience read that he was trying to prove that he was in good shape, and that he was – *sic* – in "GOOD health".

The 67-year-old president, who tends to oscillate from insomniac hyperactivity to exhausted inactivity, said he started the day "at 5am", having woken at 4am. "It does not affect either my appearance or my energy. We don't know what will happen in our lives, but now I am in good health. In the future I don't know."

At this point, the mystery arose. According to a transcript from MSNBC, Mr Yeltsin made an unclear reference to the next election, which could have been taken as a hint that he had not ruled out a third term. "As for

the presidency, for the year 2000 we still have two years. We'll see." However, these words were not present in a Kremlin transcript of the event.

Answering a question about his younger daughter, Tatyana, a senior adviser, he announced that Russia was "not prepared ... for my daughter, or any other woman at this time."

It appears the country once governed by Catherine the Great and which reveres Margaret Thatcher is not ready for another matriarchy. Which is not to say that, in the president's eyes, women have no contribution to make. Mr Yeltsin praised his wife, Naina, and two daughters for taking care of him.

The Internet session was part of a move to raise Mr Yeltsin's international profile in the run-up to this week's G8 summit in Birmingham.

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Racism seeps into respectable German life

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

GERMANY'S most sensationalist tabloid, *Bild Zeitung*, stunned its readers yesterday by claiming that foreigners in their midst were no more inclined to criminality than the natives.

In a prominently displayed article on "beer-ball prejudices", the paper set out to dispel myths that few politicians have had the courage to rebut in the run-up to September's elections. "Internal security" is one of the main themes of the campaign, and the threat to it is almost invariably perceived to be coming from outsiders.

Now the right-wing *Bild* wants to put the record straight. The crime statistics blurted out by politicians are misleading, it warns. Some 28 per cent of all crime is attributed to foreigners, who account for less than 9 per cent of the population. But these offences include infringements of immigration rules, the paper notes. A foreigner who sneaks into the country is thus a criminal on arrival. However, "among foreigners who have

in last month's vote will not renounce xenophobia just because hardly any foreigners live in their *Land*.

The problem is that anxiety about foreign influences is not confined to society's losers. "Foreigners are guests in our country," declared a visiting politician from Bonn, addressing a rally four days before the Saxony-Anhalt vote on the market square of Magdeburg. He was speaking about crime at this point, and could not help noticing all the DVU posters on the lamp-posts. "Criminal Foreigners Out," the posters screamed. "Foreigners who do not abide by the law can make themselves scarce," intoned the statesman on the rostrum. His name was Helmut Kohl: the same man who brought us the euro and all that peace and harmony on our continent.

His remark was barely noticed by the German media. The "linkage" between crime and foreign origin is an axiom. Russians are brothel-keepers or gangsters. Poles are indolent car thieves or hyper-active building labourers who steal German jobs, and Africans are shop-lifters.

The biggest groups, the Turks, are something else. As *Bild* points out, the criminal rate among them is extremely low, yet they are seen to pose other dangers to German society. Turks are said to be given to religious fanaticism; their alien ways trouble the majority. There is just one MP of Turkish origin - a Greek.

A tiny proportion of "guest workers" have obtained German passports in the past quarter-century. A recent attempt to offer third-generation immigrants the prospect of automatic German citizenship was torpedoed earlier this year by right-wingers in Chancellor Kohl's coalition. Neo-Germans, as Mr Kohl emphasises, must remain "guests". Prospects for social advancement in this limbo are, therefore, limited.

In reality, "foreigners" and German thoroughbreds live together without much friction, at least in the west. The only reason the "foreigner question" has gained such prominence recently is that Chancellor Kohl has an election to win in September.

He cannot, as he would like, campaign on tax reform and job creation, because he has already failed to deliver on past promises. He cannot trumpet his greatest achievement - European monetary union - because the majority of Germans detest the euro. That leaves him "internal security", the magic phrase that hits the right-wing button every time. And since he has had 16 years to strengthen law and order, the problem needing to be fixed must be a new one. Step right forward, you malingering "guests".

The opposition must remain silent, because they are seen to be lacking foreigner-bashing credentials. "There are two kinds of election themes," a se-

nior Social Democrat campaign manager explained recently. "Winning themes, such as employment, training and the family. And there are positioning themes. Internal security belongs to the latter. In this area we cannot win - we can only position ourselves."

That means keeping their heads down. Last year, Gerhard Schröder, the Social Democrats' chancellor candidate, tried to steal some right-wing clothes by advocating deportation for "foreign criminals". The new policy was given a test-run at regional elections in Hamburg, where it only succeeded in boosting the vote of the DVU.

Leader, page 18



Despite the low crime rate among Turks, many Germans are troubled by their 'alien ways'

Photograph: Sipa Press/Rex Features

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Helmut Kohl: 'Foreigners who break the law can make themselves scarce'

lived with for a long time, the crime rate is lower than among German citizens.

Coming from *Bild*, this kind of expose is no less startling than a pro-German editorial would be in the *Sun*. For readers who could bear to continue, a litany of negatives lay in store. It was not true settlers from the former Soviet Union were being pampered with generous state handouts and pensions, the article declared. And, most shockingly, foreigners did NOT take away jobs from Germans. They mostly did work no German was prepared to do. The country had to import 180,000 seasonal workers from Eastern Europe, for instance, to help with this year's harvest.

For all *Bild*'s commendable effort, it would be premature to expect the beer halls to transform into temples of multi-culturalism overnight. Record unemployment is generating an underclass seething with discontent, and it is not easy to blind their prejudice with simple arithmetic. The angry young men of Saxony-Anhalt, who flocked to the racist German People's Union (DVU)

Nation debates best place for the comma

COMMAS, hyphens and double consonants hurtled through the air in Germany's Constitutional Court yesterday, as its venerable judges in velvet robes grappled with dictionaries, writes Imre Karacs. It was the first day of their deliberations over the greatest intellectual undertaking of the German-speaking people this century.

Since 1901 philologists have been trying to agree over the correct spelling of imported words like "restaurant" and the arcane rules of punctuation. All in the aid of *Rechtschreibreform*, the epoch-making attempt to tidy up the language and, allegedly, to simplify it.

The project is finished, the books have been printed, but in place of the order their endeavour had sought to create, chaos reigns. One of the lawyers who took the new rule-book to the country's supreme legal authority says

his children "no longer know what is right".

The plaintiff's twins are nine years old. In their first years at school, they were well on their way to learning the 212 rules pertaining to German spelling. After the reform, only 112 are to remain.

And to prove that the scholars have not wasted the past 97 years, they have also discarded many of the commas that bedevil the average German sentence. The new user-friendly German is democratic, too. For the first time in a century, writers will be given a choice of spellings for some words. Unfortunately, while the number of rules may have been reduced, the number of exceptions has gone up proportionately.

That is not what bothers the twins, however. The reform has faced a series of legal challenges. A verdict is expected in September, at the start of the new school year.



UNICEF/M. Peru

World turns on India over N-tests

By Peter Popham
in Delhi

INDIA spent an uncomfortable first day as the sixth and latest member of the club of self-declared nuclear nations. Australia and New Zealand recalled their high commissioners, Japan threatened to cut off aid, China said it was "gravely concerned" and everyone from the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to Bill Clinton wagged their heads sorrowfully at the testing of three nuclear weapons, including an H-bomb, at an underground site in the Rajasthan desert.

Closer to home, however, the news was greeted with delight. Pakistan was caught off balance and appeared stunned. Dominating the front page of *Dawn*, a respected Pakistani national daily, was an enormous colour photograph of a mushroom cloud, uncaptioned. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, told parliament: "The responsibility for dealing a death blow to the global efforts of nuclear non-proliferation rests squarely with India."

Pakistan's top nuclear scientist, Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, spoke truthfully when he said: "We had been feeling for a long time that India will carry out a thermonuclear test." But that was the beauty of India's timing: 24 years is a long time to wait for the other shoe to drop, and so well was the secret of the test protected that the rest of the world had to scramble to reason.

One reason that even India's neighbours were lulled into complacency was that the Defence Minister in the coalition government, George Fernandes, an old-fashioned socialist, has in the past spoken out against India's nuclear capability. The government's "National Agenda for

Governance", echoing the manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Hindu nationalists who dominate it, had trailed Monday's test with what appears with hindsight to be stark clarity: "To ensure the security, territorial integrity and unity of India," it stated, "we will... exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons." But everyone, including many inside the government, assumed such an event must be a long way down the road; the more so because Mr Fernandes had implied that "exercising" that option would not take place until the newly established National Security Council had carried out its strategic defence review.

CIA caught napping

The chairman of the US Senate intelligence committee yesterday called the CIA's apparent failure to pick up India's nuclear test preparations yesterday as a "colossal failure... perhaps the biggest one in recent years", writes Mary Dejevsky. Calling for hearings as early as this week, Richard Shelby said: "We want to know why this happened, how this happened, who was asleep, why they were asleep."

The Indian media's response was jubilant. "The thermonuclear explosion on Monday has placed India on a par with the United States and Russia in terms of nuclear capability," the *Times of India* quoted "defence experts" as saying. "Explosion of self-esteem," burred the *Pioneer*. The *Economic Times* warned of the risk of "economic implosion", and a columnist in the same paper opined that the test "shifts India from the sensible position of aiming for de-

terrence capacity to the delusion of grandeur that it should aim for superpower status". But these were lonely voices.

As the government is led by Hindu nationalists, who have not held power for more than a fortnight before and who are often labelled "fascists" by their opponents, some foreign commentators have seen the hand of political extremism behind the nuclear tests. In one sense this is correct: the Congress government of Narasimha Rao was dissuaded from testing weapons in 1995 by American threats of sanctions, and the dithering of this government's predecessor, the inappropriately named United Front, could never have summoned the necessary resolution. This sudden and bold initiative reveals a new and decisive attitude in Indian government - one whose first imperative, one might say, is not to be cowed.

But the inference that this pushes the government into an extreme position vis-à-vis their parliamentary opponents is quite wrong. Spokesmen of parties representing nearly all shades of opinion (except the Marxist left, which said nothing) joined in congratulating the government. "It is a matter of pride, and it proves India is second to none," said the former prime minister, Inder Gujral. Madhavrao Scindia of the Congress party said: "The tests are the logical culmination of the process initiated by Indira Gandhi in 1974. Every sovereign country needs to ensure that adequate steps are taken to safeguard the country's security interest."

Such opinions echo the common man's view that, for all its great size, India is pushed around by other nations far too easily. Monday put a stop to that notion.



Palestinians in the West Bank refugee camp at Balata yesterday marking 50 years of 'living under the tent' of Israeli occupation

Albright gambles on PR battle with Israel

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

THE UNITED STATES Administration brought its diplomatic stand-off with Israel into the public arena yesterday in a bold and calculated move to turn up the pressure on the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and win the battle for public opinion.

Less than 24 hours before Mr Netanyahu was due to meet the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright,

for a make-or-break meeting on the peace process in Washington, Ms Albright gave a lecture to the National Press Club in the US capital setting out some of the US peace proposals that Israel has been so reluctant to embrace.

The lecture, arranged less than a day in advance and designed for an audience that would include all major media outlets and commentators in the US capital, represented a direct challenge to Mr Netanyahu. He had indicated he would use a private

visit to the US later this week to take his case straight to the American public and lobby personally on Capitol Hill.

It was also a challenge to the influential Jewish lobby which last month persuaded 81 out of 100 Senators to sign an open letter to President Bill Clinton appealing to him not to make the terms of the latest US peace proposals public. The letter argued such tactics would bring unacceptable pressure to bear on Israel and undermine Mr Ne-

tanyahu's negotiating position. A major Jewish group yesterday requested an urgent meeting with Mr Clinton, saying it was concerned about a possible change in US Middle East policy.

Some of the details of the US proposals, including a plan to give Israel a contingency role in the security of part of the land that would revert to Palestinian rule, have gradually seeped into the public domain. Most of the specifics, though, have been kept under wraps.

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Shanty trading the norm as Zambia's industries wither

ZAMBIA has become a nation of traders. It is impossible to enter a shop or office in central Lusaka without having to squeeze through row after row of ramshackle roadside stalls.

On the main streets they sell shoes, bags, clothes, electrical equipment. In residential areas it is small amounts of food or individual cigarettes arranged in delicate patterns to disguise the fact that the seller has not much stock.

"It's great," a World Bank official told me. "economic activity on such a scale has to be a good sign." He would say that. Street trading sprang up in 1993 soon after Zambia's new government brought in an economic-reform programme inspired by the World Bank and IMF. In Zambia today no one seems to make, mine or grow anything: they are all selling to one another.

When you look closely at the stalls you find they are selling identical produce at identical prices. And business is poor. "You can go all day without selling," said a trader who travels to Zimbabwe by bus to buy stock. "That's terrible, because you have to sell at knockdown prices, so turnover is crucial."

At the poorer end of the scale the shanty trader can end up eating unbought stock, leaving no money to replenish it. "I used to sell tomatoes but too much didn't sell and went bad. So I switched to this," said Matilda Phiri, a widow. She now smashes rock into gravel



POSTCARD FROM AFRICA
Paul Valtely

in the hope of making a little money selling it to a builder.

A diplomat from one of the nations to which Zambia owes a large chunk of its foreign debt said: "It's all trade, and it's good. If maize passes through Zambia in transit from South Africa to the Congo that's a worthwhile trade. It creates jobs."

Things look different to the hungry of the Copper Belt who see the cereal pass by on its way to the Congo, where it sells at a good price. The market is working perfectly in this, matching supply to demand, taking the food to where there is the money to pay for it. The shame is that ordinary Zambians do not have the cash, nor do the businessmen. Part of the reform demanded by the West is large-scale privatisation. Some 215 of the 315 state businesses have been sold in a programme which the World Bank sees as "the wonder of Africa".

But Zambian entrepreneurs cannot afford to buy. Most of the businesses have been sold to foreigners.

Akihito bid to bury hatchet

EMPEROR Akihito acknowledged that the Second World War still haunted Japan's relations with Britain, but pledged to work for improved ties during his state visit. He made the remarks at a rare briefing at which he called the war "very unfortunate". The comments appeared designed in part to head off criticism of the visit from British veterans. — AP, Tokyo

Kosovo clash

TWO ethnic Albanians were killed and a policeman was wounded in Pristina, capital of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo. Fighting between police and separatists has been moving closer to Pristina in recent weeks. — Reuters, Pristina

Whale toll

MORE than 18,000 whales have been killed since a moratorium came into effect 12 years ago, the World Wildlife Fund said. Norway and Japan received the harshest criticism. A legal loophole allows them to kill whales for "scientific reasons". — AP, Glond, Switzerland

Tsar's cross

CROSSES for the tombs of Tsar Nicholas II and his family will be cut from a cypress from the family's former estate at Livadia in the Crimea. Russia's last tsar is to be buried in St Petersburg on 17 July, the 80th anniversary of his execution by the Bolsheviks. The family spent its last summers at Livadia. — AP, Moscow

Former minister killed in Colombia election violence

By Phil Davison
in Bogotá

COLOMBIA'S presidential election campaign was thrown into turmoil yesterday after a former defence minister was shot dead in the capital, Bogotá.

Retired General Fernando Landazabal Reyes, 76, defence minister in the early Eighties and adviser to presidential candidate General Harold Bedoya, was walking alone from his apartment to his office in northern Bogotá when two men pulled alongside in a red car, and shot him three times in the head. The car was later found abandoned nearby.

General Bedoya is running a distant fourth in the 31 May presidential election, which has already been marred by a series of killings, bomb blasts on candidates' offices, left-wing guerrilla attacks and massacres by right-wing paramilitary. But despite having little chance of the presidency, General Bedoya has become an influential political figure through an aggressive campaign.

As General Landazabal's body, covered by a sheet, lay on the pavement yesterday morning, Colombia's army commander General Hugo Galán said the killing could have been the work of any of various sides in Colombia's violence. "Subversives [left-wing guerrillas] could be behind it. Private justice could be behind it," he said. There was immediate widespread speculation that left-

wingers may have killed the conservative retired general in retaliation for last month's assassinations of a leading human rights lawyer and a former communist party activist. Many Colombians believe right-wing "death squads," possibly linked with the armed forces, were behind those killings.

General Landazabal, defence minister of President Belisario Betancur in the early Eighties, was sacked in 1984 after publicly opposing proposed peace talks between the Betancur government and Marxist rebels.

Yesterday, he was walking from his home to his office as he did every morning. He had stopped using bodyguards many years ago, friends said. Shortly before 8am, neighbours heard four shots, saw the retired general slumped on the pavement and saw a red car screech away.

"This act is part of the escalating violence that is attempting to destabilize the electoral process by means of ideological crimes and radicalized positions against peace," President Ernesto Samper said after the murder.

Mr Samper was badly tainted by accusations that he received funds from the Cali cocaine cartel during his 1994 election campaign, and is not running on 31 May. Andres Pastana, a former mayor of Bogotá, is the clear front-runner, although short of the 50 per cent vote needed to avoid a head-to-head run-off next month with the second-placed finisher.

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Sorry seems to be the hardest word

Sir Elton John and his manager John Reid have been friends for years and suffered their fair share of rows. So why have they split up for good? By Pierre Perrone

THE ANNOUNCEMENT yesterday that Sir Elton John had parted with long-time manager John Reid may have surprised most people but the writing was probably on the wall at the beginning of the year.

Back in January, disclosures of Sir Elton's lavish lifestyle and spiralling expenses made the *Daily Mirror* front page. Trainee solicitor and obsessive Elton aficionado Benjamin Pell had hacked into various computers connected to the singer's organisation. Pell had also sifted through dustbins outside the offices of John Reid Enterprises and obtained credit-card statements.

The tabloids had a field day, highlighting an occasion when Sir Elton had spent more than half a million pounds in 24 hours. Visits to jewellers, designer shops, florists and auction houses were all taking their toll on the superstar's finances. A warning letter from accountants Price Waterhouse to Sir Elton's management rang alarm bells. Despite an upcoming world tour, a sponsorship agreement with Citibank and a multimillion-dollar deal to write more Disney soundtracks, the singer was said to be eight weeks away from running out of cash. Sure, money was still rolling in, but with earnings from all his single releases going his AIDS foundation and the huge royalties from *Candle In The Wind* earmarked for the Diana Fund, he had to slow down the rate of his spending.

Reid, a long-time associate and confidant, probably read the singer the riot act to try

to help him get his finances and his act in order. The pair had a tumultuous relationship over the years and even fought physically before kissing and making up. This time, however, there seemed to be no going back.

Coming from a working-class background in Paisley, Reid can be blunt at times. He studied to be a marine engineer and for a while, he performed with a folk group around his native Scotland. In 1969, when he was only 20, Reid moved to London to work for Ardmore-Beechwood, a music publishing firm which was part of EMI.

Keen and knowledgeable, Reid became UK manager for the American Tamla Motown label, then distributed by EMI. He would select releases for the British market and work on their promotion. His business acumen led him to pick "Tears Of A Clown", a 1967 Smokey Robinson and The Miracles album track, for single release. When the song reached number one in Britain, the American company followed suit and the US release sold more than a million copies in 1970.

Elton John, then a struggling performer but already a big soul fan and compulsive record collector, visited friend David Cocker at EMI. Reid's office was the next one along the corridor of EMI old Manchester Square headquarters and all three would chat away about music for hours. Soon Reid and Elton became more than pure flatmates. Reid arranged for Elton to meet one of his idols, Stevie Wonder. Later, Reid accompanied Elton on his

first American tour. Over the years, the singer had been advised and managed by the likes of Muff Winwood, song publisher Dick James (who was later sued by Elton for control over his publishing), Steve Brown and Ray Williams. In March 1971, the singer appointed Reid as his manager in place of the latter.

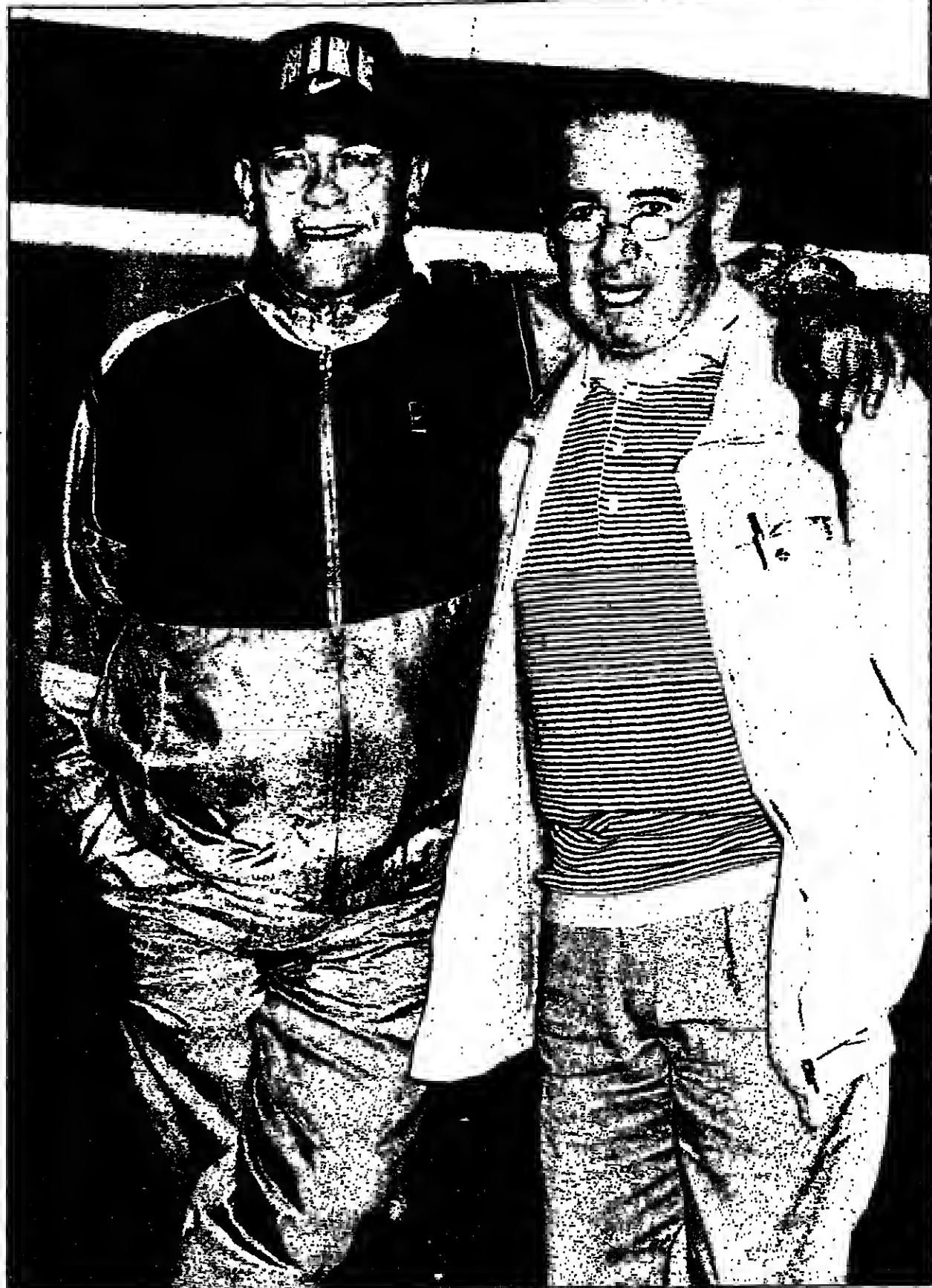
Within a year, the businessman formed John Reid Enterprises. As Elton took off around the world, he negotiated a huge American deal with MCA Records, for \$8m dollars over five years. In 1973, like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones before him, Elton decided to form his own record company: Rocket Records.

Reid was heavily involved, along with Elton associates, such as lyricist Bernie Taupin and producer Gus Dudgeon. The Rocket team helped mastermind the mid-1970s comeback of Neil Sedaka and gave Cliff Richard his first Top Ten hit in the US with "Devil Woman". However, the label's biggest success came in 1976 with "Don't Go Breaking My Heart", Elton's infectious duet with Kiki Dee. Other acts to appear on Rocket included Judie Tzuke and The Lambretas, but rumoured link-ups with Queen and 10CC, which would have put the label on a stronger footing, never materialised.

Over the years, Reid has acted as manager and consultant for various artists including Queen, Kiki Dee, Simple Minds, Billy Connolly, Barry Humphries (and his Dame Edna alter-ego), George Michael and, until the end of last year, Riverdance star Michael Flatley. Yet, Reid never quite managed to establish a powerhouse away from his main artist and major client.

Sometimes difficult, always neatly dressed, something of a gourmet, bon vivant and an amateur cook, "Reidy" (as his associates are allowed to call him) seemed to have overcome his drinking problem around the sale time as his charge fought his various addictions. Reid often defended Elton to the hilt. In 1974, he even served three weeks in jail after punching journalist David Wheeler in New Zealand. Reid has already earned a fortune put at a conservative \$100m.

For Sir Elton, a possible way out of the financial mire and undoubtedly huge financial settlement coming Reid's way would be a stockmarket listing at la David Bowie. Investors could buy shares in him and profit from investing in a song catalogue which is reportedly worth more than £100m. Lyricist Bernie Taupin will have his say on the matter.



Sir Elton with John Reid (above) in happier times, and with other long-term friend Bernie Taupin (left)



HARD MEN: MANAGERS WITH ATTITUDE

Don Arden

Over the years, represented The Small Faces, The Move, Black Sabbath and Electric Light Orchestra. Not averse to dangling rival managers from windows. The late and infamous Peter Grant, who oversaw the rise of Led Zeppelin, learned most of tricks from him.

Bill Curbishley

Helped The Who sort out their finances after they left Chris Stamp and Kit Lambert. Now looks after Jimmy Page and Robert Plant, as well as surviving

members of The Who, Judas Priest and Curve.

Roger Davies

The Australian single-handedly resurrected the careers of Tina Turner and Joe Cocker. Now handles M-People and Janet Jackson in Europe.

Allan Klein

In the late 1960s, renegotiated deals for The Rolling Stones and The Beatles. Was later sued by Paul McCartney over the break-up of Apple. Recently managed to

secure for his ABCO company the whole of the publishing of The Verve's "Bittersweet Symphony" after the band admitted to sampling an orchestral version of "The Last Time".

Rod Smallwood

Nicknamed small-wallet, the Iron Maiden manager has cornered the heavy metal market (Bruce Dickinson, Wasp, Helloween) but shows signs of diversifying with Catherine Wheel and Felice. Recently floated his Sanctuary company on the stockmarket.

It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me

Beryl Bainbridge is finished with her native city. That didn't stop her partly setting her latest novel there. By Michael Glover

HIGH, neo-classical book shelving; a lovely, velvet-covered window seat from which to admire a prospect of beeches; a docile, sun-struck audience; and, suddenly in the foreground, a single jarring note; some small, slight women, hurrying, hunching up the room towards a table, clutching a thin book and a spilling wine glass. 10 long minutes late for an appointment with herself.

Beryl Bainbridge turns to face us. The face, gaunt, intense, tapering, is rather seamed and crumpled looking as if it's spent too long beneath the old horse-hair mattress on that cast-iron bed up in the attic. She is wearing a flower-print frock underneath an almost ankle-length coat with high, puffed shoulders that looks as though it might once have belonged to one of the highway men that frequented these parks - until the motorcar killed them off.

She switches on the intense light of her smile, switches it off again, and then apologises for herself, quite needlessly. "Although it is partly set in Liverpool, I'm not going to read this," she shakes her new novel, *Master George*, about in the air a bit to get some light into it - "in a Liverpool accent," she says, this famous daughter of Liverpool. "For a start, I was sent to elocution classes as a little girl... and, anyway, the kinds of accents you hear on television these days - *Brookside* or *Cilla Black* - are pure pastiche..." she



hisses disapprovingly. She bends towards the audience as she reads, one hand propped against the back of a chair. The other swarms around in the air, gesturing, stabbing out. She speaks vehemently, matter of factly, as if this is the plainest of plain tales, and it's just a matter of ramming it down our throats. Her mouth is very

mobile, and often very wide open, too, when she reads. The novel is set, in part, during the Crimean War. When she describes the dead man with flies buzzing at his mouth, his flesh the colour of bad meat, she pauses, biting down on her lip. There is not a word to spare about this writing, and to hear her reading it is like watching

someone unpack a fine set of precision tools.

When it comes to questions, she belts them all straight back, but leaning forward and out of it, alert, combative, which means that the chair is on two legs the whole time. No, she's not much of a reader of contemporary fiction. Why should she read

Rushdie? She doesn't know a thing about India, and she doesn't want to know. It's so far from Liverpool. She's never read Evelyn Waugh either. She found him so peculiar because he never actually described anybody. Then she thinks for a minute, chewing on that lower lip again. "When I was young, I read that chap who died on a

motorbike - was it *Dermot Walsh*? Welch? I don't remember a thing that he wrote now though."

Her own first novel, *Harriet Said*, seemed a marvel to her, so lyrical, such a wonderful evocation of her own childhood - until she suddenly realised that it had no plot. So she pinched one from a newspaper: that story about the two little girls who killed their mother in New Zealand years ago. Every novel needs a plot just like a piece of sculpture needs an armature - something to hang the whole thing on. And newspapers are very good places to find them. And does she ever go back to Liverpool? Asks a young Liverpoolian girl, speaking in an accent that sounds suspiciously like a pastiche of Cilla Black's. She used to - but not anymore. "I've finished with Liverpool," replies Bainbridge. "It's all gone, all the old streets. Everybody's died..."

Then she glances around, half expectantly. Her eyes swim behind her spectacles. "Apart from the ones that keep turning up at book talks," she stabs at the table with her finger end. "Do you know why we came down here in 1963 in the first place? Because my brother had been peed on in the playground, and they thought the schools would be better in London. How laughable." She gives us a cheeky wink.

IN THE FIVE TRIANGLE

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When Sophy Robinson left the boardroom behind, she expected plenty of domestic help from her partner. Things didn't work out that way

The things men do (and don't)



Sophy Robinson and her children: Her partner declined to be photographed, on the grounds that it might embarrass him

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

WHAT SHE DOES, WHAT HE DOES

Me: Hire and manage cleaner
Him: Grumbles when shirts not ironed
Me: Hire and manage nanny
Him: Tells me to tell the nanny what not to do
Me: Research and fix holidays
Him: Fixes own skiing holiday
Me: Prepare, buy stuff and pack for holidays
Him: Loads car and drives to holiday location
Me: Organise other families to holiday with
Him: Wonders why his 'old' friends don't holiday with us
Me: Organise cleaner and nanny around holidays
Me: Children's clothes: buy, sort, mend, give away to charity/friends; check shoes/slippers/wellies still fit - either buy or ask nanny to replace; clean children's shoes
Him: No idea what clothes/socks fit whom
Me: Cover on weekday mornings till nanny starts work at 8.30am (he leaves 6.50am)
Him: Covers most weekend mornings
Me: Cover all weekday nights when no babysitter, unless make special plea him to be back by 7.30pm so I can go out
Him: Gets back by 7.45pm saying 'sorry, I just couldn't get off the phone'
Me: Make school packed lunches etc
Me: Check homework is done
Me: Organise children's extra-curricular activities
Me: Research and visit schools; get on waiting lists, complete forms and sort bills
Him: Does make effort and often succeeds in getting to school plays, teacher-feedback sessions
Me: Organise school uniform/outfits for plays; order and sew labels in uniforms
Me: Organise MOT, service etc for both cars
Him: Repairs bikes/takes them to bike shop
Me: Take and collect cars to/from garage or make sure nanny does
Him: Washes & vacuums cars
Me: Buy furniture, fittings, crockery, cutlery etc
Me: Fixes breakages
Me: Select, order and collect curtains, blinds etc
Him: Buys & replaces light bulbs
Me: Check and pay household bills; organise decorators, plumbers, glaziers; gas man etc
Him: Does odd-jobs round house
Me: Takes rubbish to dump; does gardening, mows lawn; waters garden plants when remembers to
Me: Water house plants when remember to; chuck out dead plants
Me: Organise nappy bag, toddlers' items, outdoor clothes, snacks etc for outings
Him: Is always mysteriously occupied in run-up to leaving house on family outing
Me: Organise friends/family visits and meals; prompt him to phone his relatives and friends
Me: Arrange haircuts, dental, doctor's visits; make sure medicines administered

WHEN I ceased to be a "my-money-is-my-own" free spirit on the arrival of my first child six years ago, deciding what was a fair split of the income and the domestic chores all seemed pretty straightforward. My partner and I earned exactly the same amount of money, and over a relaxed dinner - as much as dinner is relaxed when you are 40 weeks, five days and three hours pregnant - agreed to set up and contribute the same amount of our hard-earned income into a joint bank account. Another glass of wine and we had agreed that the domestic tasks would be split evenly between us too. It all seemed blissfully liberated, fair and well balanced. Stagger home, fall into bed, give birth next day, freeze frame and jump six years.

We now have three children aged 6, 4 and 2 and all the serious "commitments" that entails. A house that is large enough to accommodate the brood and my office - as I now work from home. Then there are all those little mouths to feed, bodies to clothe, minds to educate, after-school activities to fund, birthday and Christmas presents to purchase - never mind the odd holiday in which to try and recover our sanity.

But, while the bills have become mountainous, a chasm has emerged between what my husband and I earn. He still works in the City, where there has been a per-

iod of generous bonuses, while I - having finally given up my seat in the boardroom of the communications company - have gone freelance and work (in theory, and sometimes in practice) part-time.

We originally tried to accommodate this disparity in earning power by funding the joint account - and therefore our family costs - in proportion to each of our incomes. So when he had a good period, while my

What started to creep in me was resentment; in him a combination of tunnel vision and guilt

freelance work was a bit slow, he put substantially more money into the joint account.

But steadily the calm and the balance has eroded. There has been a creeping volunteerism on my part, and an assumption on his that, because I work from home, I work fewer hours and, therefore, that it falls to me to organise our domestic life.

We both hit a really busy patch at work - his patch lasted for four months, and mine

for two. Suddenly the domestic harmony went flying up the chimney pot. What started to creep in me was resentment, and in him a combination of tunnel vision and guilt. The single-minded pursuit of City "deals" blinded him to the scuffed school shoes, the clutter in the playroom, the festering goo under the kitchen table after Sunday tea and the withering houseplants.

A week passed in which we barely saw him, and most of the next Sunday he spent closeted in my office working. My temper snapped just before the children's bathtime and, while he put the children to bed - trying to calm screams of "mummy, we want mummy" - I fumed downstairs. "I know there are more important and tragic things in the world than this, and that I lead a charmed life, but this is driving me insane," I said to myself. I am a list-maker by nature, so to calm my fury I made a list (see right) of all the things he does, and all the things I do, to keep this family ticking over.

To give him his due, when I showed it to him, he immediately volunteered a list of things that he would do instead of me. When he got to the item "Sunday papers" - he looked up, puzzled and said, "What do you mean by 'Sunday papers' - that I spend a lot of time reading them?" "No, no," I reassured him. "I mean that you pay the newspaper, cancel them if we go away and complain if they aren't delivered on time."

Now, the thing is that my man is a new man. A recently-divorced girlfriend of mine came for lunch last weekend. When he helped tidy the post-lunch debris away and then went off to check that the six children weren't killing each other upstairs, and stayed there with them, she remarked "My God, you've got him well trained!"

He is a wonderful Dad - when he is here he plays with them, takes them out for trips,

He spent Sunday working. My temper snapped just before the children's bathtime

reads to them, dresses them (albeit eccentrically) and puts them to bed. But, how do other working mothers manage all this stuff, and what is the right equation - the caring, sharing, both partners working but nesting, 1990s equation. If you work the same hours as your partner but earn much less, do you have to pick up the domestic tab? If you work fewer hours, earn less and have a "less stressful" job, how do you work out the

right allocation? And what is a reasonable amount to dump on the nanny, without turning her into an exhausted grump for whom the children just become a list of chores?

My answer is:
1. Write down your own version of my list, get your partner to write one as well and compare notes;
2. Decide what each of you likes to do most and what you like least;
3. Decide/ask what the children prefer you to do;
4. Work out what you can delegate to an employee, whether you can afford to and who will manage that person;
5. Delegate the things you both like least and that the children don't care about;
6. Agree that the children need warmth, affection and fun, rather than a pristine home and worn-down drudge for a mother (or a father);
7. Get him to write his list down, which includes his new responsibilities, and stick the list in a very prominent place in the kitchen out of reach of the children;
8. Don't take pity on him and start to do the things he promised to do.

Above all, don't get sidetracked by arguments about who earns what, the hours you work and the relative stress you have to endure. Whatever the arguments, he should be doing more to help you - show me a man who shouldn't.

Meanwhile, back in the Fifties ...

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1955



The good wife's guide

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.
- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1955

- Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper etc and then run a dustcloth over the tables.
- Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, entering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.
- Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimise all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.
- Be happy to see him.
- Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.
- Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first - remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.
- Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.
- Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquillity where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.
- Don't greet him with complaints and problems.
- Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.
- Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or have him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.
- Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.
- Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and tranquillity. You have no right to question him.
- A good wife always knows her place.

Advice taken from a women's magazine published in the Fifties

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Main picture: purple vest, £90 and grey tube skirt, £35, by Issey Miyake Pleats Please, 20 Brook Street, W1 (enq. 0171 351 0903). Liberty, Regent Street, London W1

Top left: white cotton crumpled shirt/jacket, £79, from Homma, at Liberty, Regent Street, London, W1; aqua pleat skirt, £95, by Katharine Hamnett, 20 Sloane Street, London SW1 (enq. 0171 287 6767.)

Bottom left: pink cotton shirt, £58, from Jigsaw branches nationwide (enq. 0171 491 4484); black pleat skirt, £10, from Whistles, 12 St Christophers Place, London, W1 and 9 High Street, Oxford (enq. 0171 487 4484); black shoes, £46.95 by Birkenstocks, 37 Neal Street, London, WC2. (mail order and enq. 0800 132 194)

Above: black cotton vest, £15, from Jigsaw branches nationwide (enq. 0171 491 4484); white pleat skirt, £229, by Helmut Lang from Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW1, (enq. 0171 730 1234)

Below: black backless vest, £150, by Ann Demeulemeester; beige pleat skirt, £295, by Jean Paul Gaultier, both from Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, London SW1 (enq. 0171 235 5000.)

Welcome pleats back into the fold

Designers have gone back to the drawing board (the one in school) to update the once dreaded pleated skirt. By Tamsin Blanchard

PHOTOGRAPHER: KEVIN FOORD
STYLIST: CHARLIE HARRINGTON
MAKE UP: ALEX BABSKY AT MANDY COAKLEY
HAIR: MATTHEW CROSS AT STUART WATTS
USING NICKY CLARKE HAIROMATHERAPY
MODEL: LOUISE LAURITZEN AT MODELS 1

FOR most women, pleated skirts have thoroughly nasty connotations. They bring back painful memories of the box pleat school pinafore and the tennis skirt that was so short your regulation navy blue knickers were permanently on show. Box pleats, you see, do not suit everyone.

The girl who still had to lose her puppy fat would end up having her pleats stretched out like a concertina over her wobbly hips while the skinny girl in the class – the one who refused to drink her milk at break-time – always looked like she was drowning in an excess of grey polyester. And that was just box pleats. Schools with a more liberated outlook on uniform would allow a kick pleat or an A-line skirt with an inverted pleat. Both variations were usually made of something akin to cardboard and would sit stiffly on the hips. The pleat meant that pencil skirts with splits were strictly not allowed.

Despite these inauspicious beginnings, pleats have become the fashion designer's new best friend. Now we have not just box, knife, sunray or kick pleats; we have the conceptual pleat, a pleat that is uncompromisingly wrapped around the body like softly corrugated iron, courtesy of the most innov-



ative and cerebral of designers, Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. Such artful pleatings are only for the committed however (insane or otherwise). For the rest of us, it's back to the old school pleats of our youth.

The great turn of the century couturier Fortuny was the first designer to be bitten by the pleating bug. Where the Comme des Garçons pleats are stiff and rough, Mariano Fortuny's were fluid and fragile. In 1909, Fortuny, who crossed the worlds of art, textiles and fashion, patented his pleating process inspired by Grecian robes. His Delphos dress, a long tube of impossibly tightly-pleated silk, was designed to be worn with a silk cord tied around the waist. It was the simplest but most effective of garments and is one of the great classics of twentieth century design.

Occasionally Fortuny pleats come up for auction, but the process has been updated by the Japanese designer Issey Miyake who has dedicated a whole collection to his stretchy synthetic pleats. He first introduced them to his collections in 1989 and they were so popular that he launched a separate line called Pleats Please in 1993, designed to be light,

comfortable and to shape to the contours of the body. Each wearer gives the pleats their own unique shape. The Pleats Please range is relatively affordable (from £70 for a scarf up to £260 for a long coat) and is Miyake's idea of a Utopian way of dressing. The simplicity of the pleated fabric allows the clothes to cross boundaries of age and size, to be crumpled into a small bag when travelling and to be layered according to the temperature.

While Mr Miyake might believe that pleats are for everyone, other designers are not so optimistic. Marc Jacobs used sunray and box pleats in his collection, leaving fashion editors walking away from his New York show shaking their heads despondently. If Kate Moss looks like a frump in bulky pleats, then what hope for the rest of us?

Jacobs himself agrees that pleats are not for every woman. But as his and other designers' collections give us little option this summer, (and the high street will follow in the autumn), we have chosen five different pleats for you to consider. Just remember one simple rule: the bigger your hips are, the tighter the pleats should be. And never, ever be tempted to wear socks (or navy knickers) with your box pleats.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

Gary Rhodes whips himself up into a frenzy over his passion for fancy designer suits



MY classic, all-time piece from the back of my wardrobe, is a Fujiwara suit. It will never age and one day I'm going to put it in a frame for years of enjoyment. I'm not a real fashion fanatic, left to my own devices, I'm comfortable in a nice Ted Baker shirt and easy trousers, but I do have a bit of a 'thing' for suits. I'd like to be able to say that my favourite menswear designer is Fujiwara, but so is John Rocha and I just can't decide between them. They both design real classic suits with a different edge, and I'm a huge fan. I must have at least three or four 3-piece suits by each of them. My latest suit is coming from Serena Kalsey, and I'm really excited about it, waiting for it to be finished is the worst part of having a suit made. I must confess though, that I did make one particularly bad purchase, in the shape of a Moschino jacket; it's black with white spots and red streaks. Every time I put it on, I look like a magician, in fact every one of those Moschino jackets should have been sold with a complimentary top hat and deck of cards.

Kate Lloyd

WHAT'S HOT

Stain your skin with henna "tattoos", they won't scar and are hip in Hollywood

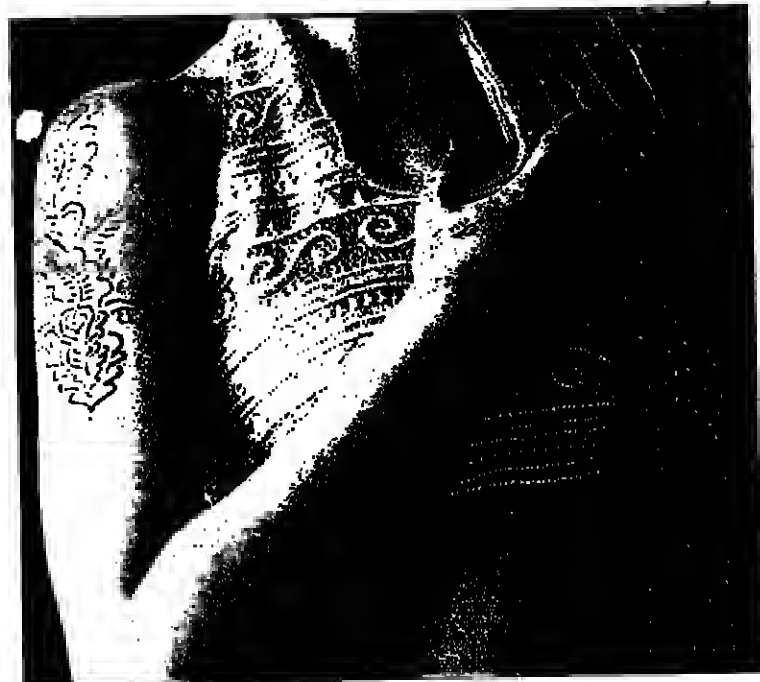
DEMI MOORE, Madonna, Mira Sorvino and Liv Tyler are all at it. They have found Mehndi, the traditional Indian henna "tattoo". While the stars have their favourite designs painted by experts, there's a DIY version to try out at home. If you need a hobby, or just have a lot of free time, then you too can try the Mehndi body painting kit.

With a two-hour resting time for the little plastic cone of henna, eucalyptus oil and magical "mixing crystals", and a two-to-eight-hour drying period, it is surprising that most of the patterns are for the hands. If you don't suffer from mundane worries such as turning on the TV or going to the toilet, then go for it.

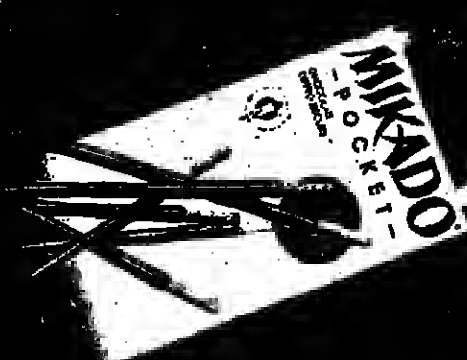
The plastic "piping" cone is very tricky to use, and I had to resort to using cocktail sticks and pins to spread the paste. Practice hard, be willing to make some long-lasting mistakes, and you too can look like a movie star.

The Mehndi body painting Kit is available from bookshops, or Books by Post, 01624 675 137, and costs £12.99.

Hannah Hunter



Mikado girls go everywhere



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Biotech price-tag on life and death

NOW YOU know. You can't patent a mouse. (People have tried). Why not? Because the European Parliament says so. The Life Patents Directive endorsed yesterday by MEPs means that the simple discovery of the genetic material of any living creature cannot, by and of itself, constitute a patentable invention and thus be exploited for commercial purposes. So, every time a drugs company finds a new gene it cannot automatically lay claim to it. No one will be able to possess the "design" of mice or rabbits or humans. This should be sufficient reply to those who understandably fear that the big drugs firms are intent on practising "bio-piracy". The idea that corporations or governments could "own" the building blocks of life itself is indeed deeply disturbing. The European Parliament were right to reject this dangerous idea.

The directive does, however, permit the patenting of genetic materials if the "inventors" can demonstrate that they have developed a process or mechanism associated with it. So a company could "own" a very special, genetically manipulated, mouse that provides a test for our sensitivity to, say, Alzheimer's disease. The EU's decision thus preserves the economic incentive for the Hoffman LaRoche and the Zeneca of this world to invest in research. There is money to be made in the alleviation of human suffering, and there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this. Clearly the drug companies will only invest in this exciting but expensive new technology if there is something in it for their shareholders. There is an increasing awareness of the investment potential of this field, as the frenzy of corporate activity and leaps in the stock market valuations of pharmaceutical companies attest.

In fact, the real, practical, ethical problem with biotechnology lies in the economics of the later stages of exploitation. A number of companies are developing a gene-based test for breast cancer. If this test is found to be fully reliable then it will obviously have huge potential benefits and, indeed, profits attached to it. A monopoly position for the successful firm will be reached where life or death will be rationed by price. Remember that the company that perfects such a test will have had no need to patent the original genetic material to find itself in such a fortunate position - the development of its discovery is the key element. But then it could also find itself in a similar position by inventing a conventional type of drug.

The real question, therefore, is the extent to which any kind of monopoly should be allowed to exist in the drugs market, genetic or conventional. Perhaps what the European Parliament should look at next is the regulation of these monopolies. The aim of a new independent "Of-drug", analogous to our existing utility regulators, should be to allow pharmaceutical companies to make adequate profits but not completely exclude the competition by charging excessive amounts for the licensing of products. The most difficult ethical dilemmas may well end up being decided by lay economists rather than professors of ethics or, indeed, parliamentarians.

German leaders must turn xenophobic tide

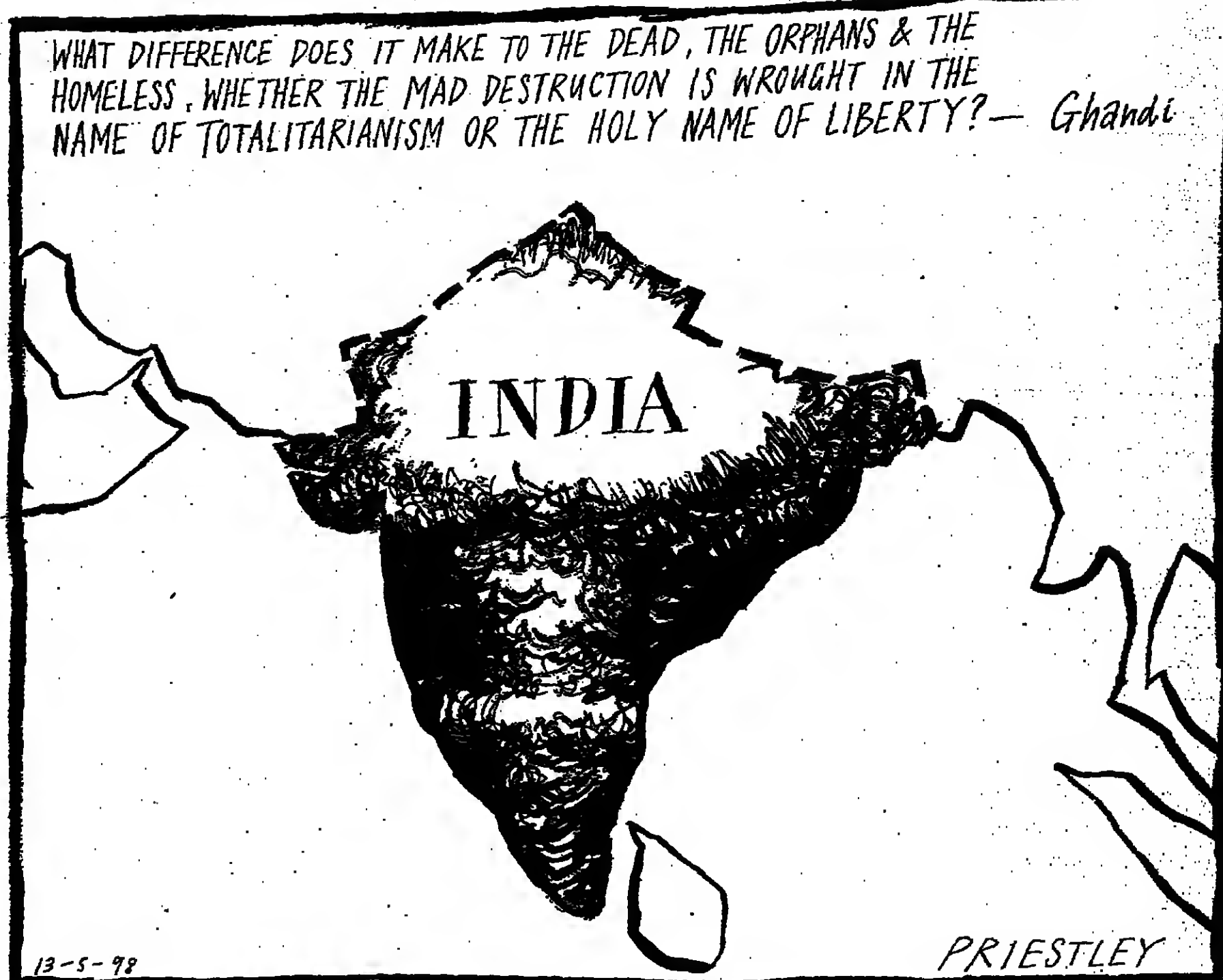
THESE ARE trying times in Germany. Signs of recovery similar to those in labour markets elsewhere are barely visible. Youth joblessness is a scandal, allowing the extreme right to make inroads in the east. The Kohl government stumbles while the challenging Social Democrats seemingly cannot decide whether to move to the right (say, on immigration) or left (on nationalisation) of the governing coalition. It's an era when scapegoats are at a premium, and Germany's foreigners - legal immigrants along with asylum seekers and illegals - are in the firing line.

It says something both reassuring and worrying that Germany's leading tabloid the *Bild Zeitung* should yesterday devote a prominent article to rebutting the beliefs that immigrants commit more crime, live off state handouts and take German jobs from natives. None of those prejudices of course holds water.

Germany's problem stems from the sudden replacement of half-hearted liberalism with a harsh policy of exclusion towards asylum-seekers at a time when - especially in the new east German *Länder* - social and economic tensions are rife. Looked at as a whole, Germany's post-war history on accepting foreigners is confused. Did any German leader ever acknowledge that large-scale immigration from Turkey would eventually make for a multicultural society? Successive German governments have been reluctant to see that the country's economic prosperity made it a magnet not just for immigrants from the East (white and relatively easily assimilable) but also for arrivals from the Mediterranean littoral and, more recently, black Africa and the Far East. Too often, German ministers and officials prevaricated, frightened of confronting the shadow of the nation's history.

But now that official policy is to return all but the most obviously oppressed asylum seekers, ministers are in danger of looking merely cruel - especially at a time when xenophobia seems to be rampant. The latest manifestation is the threat by the Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, (a Free Democrat) to chop the German aid budget in order to punish those countries, mainly African and Asian, which are not co-operating in Germany's active repatriation policy.

This is extraordinarily short-sighted since - ultimately - only economic and political development will make those exporters of asylum-seekers fit places in life. Germany is now a great nation again, in terms of population and economic potency. It is time German politicians started acting out a role of greatness on the international stage and stopped behaving like provincials playing to domestic reactionaries.



Cook's poor judgement

Sir: So what if a British company has broken a UN resolution with the collusion of the Foreign Office? Should we not be reminding ourselves that, theoretically at least, the UN exists to further democracy and protect human rights and if a Security Council resolution goes counter to these aims - as in this case - then it is a bad resolution.

In any case, the people who are directly affected by this action are not the self-righteous members of the Government, the Opposition or the British press. They are the people of Sierra Leone, and has anybody bothered to ask them what they think? We show every sign, as in so many things, of not being able to see the wood for the trees.

None of this in anyway exonerates Robin Cook or satisfactorily explains his behaviour. We now have the bizarre sight of a British Foreign Secretary committed to an ethical foreign policy condemning the implementation of a policy which was, in all but the narrow legal sense, completely ethical. Sadly one is forced to conclude that he's just not up to the job. Either in terms of his grasp on the affairs of his department or in terms of his awareness of the political fallout from a perceived cover-up - or possibly both - he has shown an extraordinary lack of judgement.

STUART RUSSELL
Cloucester, Gloucestershire

Sir: In your otherwise excellent coverage of the Sierra Leone arms sales by Sandline you accept two highly doubtful assumptions: that the UN embargo did apply to arms to the recognised government and to Ecomog (the military arm of the Economic Community of West African States - Ecomog); and that the joint action of the Sierra Leone national guard (Kamajors) and the Ecomog forces to drive out the junta of army mutineers and the Revolutionary United Front was somehow illegal.

The embargo was adopted on the initiative of the government of Sierra Leone and the Ecomog states and charges Ecomog and President Kab-

bah's government to serve as implementers. It is therefore highly implausible to suppose it was intended to apply to them. The UN Charter specifically provides for a lawful government under threat to seek and receive the assistance of friendly states. Sierra Leone's government did so and Ecomog provided assistance.

Sandline's role appears to have been primarily that of a broker procuring arms for cash for President Kabbah's government. A recognised government has the right to hire foreign forces and Sandline's single logistical and reconnaissance helicopter can hardly have been crucial in the context of the assault by 10,000 Kamajors and at least 5,000 West African infantry backed by artillery, armoured vehicles, at least 20 helicopters (including gunships), as many fixed wing aircraft and an offshore naval squadron.

The non-communication among the British Diplomatic Service, Foreign Office officials, Foreign Office ministries, Ministry of Defence, DTI and Customs indeed appears inept to the point of a *Carry On* farce but is not a breach of embargo or international law.

Professor REGINALD HERBOLD
Lewes, East Sussex

Sir: There is another aspect of British policy towards Sierra Leone that has all but been overlooked. From mid-1997 until the restoration of President Kabbah earlier this year, the UK government slashed aid to Sierra Leone. This appears to have been a deliberate component of the political strategy to dislodge the military junta.

Clearly, humanitarian aid cannot be divorced from the political context in which it is delivered. But here, the Government's aim to see the Kabbah regime reinstated rode roughshod over humanitarian concerns. Aid workers in the region were

LETTERS

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clear that well-targeted assistance could have minimised civilian suffering without compromising the international community's political objectives.

The restriction of humanitarian aid to achieve political aims is inexcusable and must not become a precedent for future responses to complex emergencies.

MARGIE BUCHANAN-SMITH
Head of Policy, ActionAid
London N19

India's nuclear tests

Sir: We strongly condemn India's pursuit of nuclear weapons signalled by Monday's nuclear tests (report, 12 May). This extremely serious development could threaten a nuclear arms race in south Asia. It also undermines attempts by many non-nuclear states to make progress on nuclear disarmament.

At the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty meeting in Geneva, which broke up in disarray last Friday, the United States blocked all attempts to make the nuclear weapon states honour the Treaty commitment which binds them to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The British delegation, despite representing the European Union, made no attempt to play a constructive role.

India, exasperated by this lack of progress, is merely imitating Britain's irresponsible example. In the United Nations General Assembly last December, China, alone amongst the nuclear weapon states, voted for a start to negotiations aimed at nuclear weapon abolition. Unless all the nuclear weapon states begin serious multilateral negotiations now, nuclear weapon proliferation is inevitable.

FRANK BLACKBAY
BRUCE KENT
Commander ROBERT GREEN RN
Abolition 2000 UK
London N1

Share out super-genes

Sir: S Pruner (letter, 11 May) is being unduly pessimistic about genetic engineering and the possible rise of a socio-economic "super-class".

In view of the fact that the prettiest girls have been joining forces with the cleverest boys ever since human evolution began, today's elite have patently got all the best genes already. Any technology which can be used to spread these superior genes around more liberally can only be a good thing for society at large.

JAMES MUSTOE
Zurich,
Switzerland

Guitar goddesses?

Sir: Glenda Cooper's article "Why rock chicks are no longer under the thumb of any guy" (9 May) skirts round one issue. Whilst I do not doubt the singing prowess of the fairer sex, why do they always have hlokes playing the instruments?

When are we going to see the female equivalent of Jimi Hendrix or Johnny Marr? Perhaps she is out there somewhere ready to wow us all, if only she could bring herself to cut her fingernails.

PAUL SMITH
Newcastle Upon Tyne

Trains, not uniforms

Sir: I see that Virgin Trains are decking out their staff in new uniforms (Business, 11 May). Thus also do Connex South Central staff parade in peacock blues and yellows.

Am I being a tad old-fashioned in thinking that train operators would be better employed in running more trains, more punctually and more reliably?

NICK WELLINGS
Brighton,
East Sussex

We are not all equal

Sir: Dana International, the winner of the Eurovision Song Contest, and your leading article (11 May) say "we are all equal". UK transsexuals know that we are not.

Amongst all the countries in the Council of Europe, only four do not recognise a transsexual person's new status. In Albania and Andorra gender reassignment is itself illegal; in the UK and Ireland it is permitted but is not recognised in law. I may live as a woman all my adult life, but I will still be recorded on my father's grave as "son" and on my own death certificate as a "male".

I am denied the right to family life: I may not marry a man, and although I may marry another woman, such a marriage cannot be consummated, and so can be instantly annulled. Neither can I adopt.

All this despite the fact that for nearly 30 years the medical profession has recognized that gender reassignment is the only effective remedy for what is now understood as a developmental abnormality.

The Government is fighting in the European Court of Human Rights to prevent UK transsexuals acquiring rights comparable to those available to other citizens of Europe (*UK vs Sheffield and Horsham*). It is gratifying that the people of Europe can "phone in their message of tolerance" to Eurovision. More is the pity that the Government cannot respond to it.

RACHAEL PADMAN
Cambridge

Sir: Rachael Padman's fellows were indeed "up in arms" (report, 11 May) - in Dr Padman's defence against Germaine Greer's attack on her and not, as implied, up in arms against Dr Padman.

R H ELLAWAY
Edinburgh

Sir: Can anyone tell me why Israel takes part in a European song contest? And shouldn't we have an entry from the Palestinians, for balance?

HEATHER HENDERSON
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire



MILES KINGSTON

Today's helping of new words and meanings to save you from English language-shock

ONE OF the most alarming things that happen when you start to grow up is that you realise that the English language, as used by other, younger or more expert people, is changing, and that words you thought had established their meaning for ever have in fact shifted again. New words are created, old words change their meaning and anyone who still thinks that "icon" means a Russian picture of Jesus, or that "riot" means black, is in for a shock, sooner or later.

To help avoid such stress, I am attempting to publish an occasional part-work glossary of the English language as it evolves, and today sees the appearance of another helping of new words and meanings.

Appropriate: Likely to get the speaker out of deep trouble, if only temporarily, as in "We have to make the appropriate response".

BAFTA: An award given to a British film to make up for its getting nothing at the Oscars.

Blockbuster: Name given to any film that fails to make a loss. If it makes quite a reasonable profit, it is called the Greatest Grosser of All Time.

Cessfire: A barely veiled threat to resume violence.

Celeb: Someone who appears on TV programmes because they have appeared on other TV programmes, though nobody can remember which ones. See Game Show.

Chat: Something which superficially resembles conversation but turns out on inspection to be quite different. On a chat show, the host does not actually converse with his guests - he merely hopes that the questions he has prepared in advance will vaguely match the stories that his guest has prepared in advance. A talk show is much the same, except that the guests are occasionally allowed to engage each other in monologues.

Clubbing: Something that hunters do to baby seals and teenagers do to each other.

Comedians: see Quiz Shows.

Coruscating: A word much misused on programmes which should know better, such as *Newsnight*. It sounds like "corrosive" so it is wrongly used to mean "scathing" and "sarcastic". Its true meaning is "sparkling, flashing with light, witty..."

Cuttings: Pieces of newspaper which, on chat shows, pass for research.

Diva: Any moderately famous female performer. Cf the phrase, "Don't forget the diva".

Dome: London's answer to the Eiffel Tower. At present the Dome is a joke. But so was the Eiffel Tower.

Eponyms: Thing named after a person, from Jean-Jacques Eponyme, who invented the eponym.

Formulaic: Term applied to any TV programme that reminds the speaker of any other TV programme, however distantly.

Game Show: TV programme devised by the government as a work opportunity for celebs who can find no other kind of employment.

Guru: See Maven.

Homage: The act of ripping off another artist.

Hyper: Big, super, as in hypermarket.

Hypo: Less, little. A hypomarket would be a good name for a corner shop.

Item: Two people temporarily living together, as in "We are an item". Also, a mysterious thing charged for on a restaurant bill but not actually consumed - cover, corkage, service, bread, etc.

Junbar: A bush which is hunted voraciously by shamou snatch squads.

Maven: See Shaman.

Monologue: The introductory portion of a chat show, and the only part of it in which

the host gets a chance to show how clever his scriptwriter is.

Natr: Said of a film in which people smoke a lot.

Peace Process: Name given to a lull in the war process.

People's: Term given to anything which the people didn't want and didn't need. People's princess, people's palace, etc.

Probe: Name given to an unsuccessful police investigation.

Quiz Show: TV programme devised by the government as a work opportunity for comedians who can find no other kind of employment.

Quote: Any remark made by a famous person in a cutting which the person doesn't remember making and probably didn't see.

Shaman: See Guru.

Supermodel: Another word for model. Template: Push word for pattern.

Blair to host a down-sized economic summit in Brum



HAMISH
McRAE

STAND by for a weekend of politicians prancing about in front of the cameras, for the economic summit is coming to town. But expect this year for them to prance to a different tune.

The show is coming to Birmingham: the Group of Eight, or G8 to the aficionados, comprising the seven largest economies in the world plus Russia. Actually, the additional member ought by rights to be China, not Russia, for the Chinese economy is far larger than the Russian one. But the Russians were offered economic summit membership as a consolation prize for not fussing too much about the eastward expansion of Nato.

The show will sound important, for Clinton and Yeltsin, etc. will be sampling the delights of Brum, and these are people who inevitably command headlines, though not necessarily for the right reasons. Whether the event actually is important... well, see what you think.

These summits have been taking place each year for more than 20 years - they started in the bleak days after the first oil shock when the world seemed to be facing economic catastrophe and it seemed helpful to try to co-ordinate economic policies. But in recent years they have degenerated into little more than photo-opportunities, treated by the financial markets, where real power lies, with a mixture of disdain and contempt.

The world has changed. Few people now believe that top-down intervention by governments can improve the world economy, whereas in the 1970s that was received wisdom. The great boom of the last two decades has been built on bottom-up, market-driven ideas. The very fact that Russia should now be at the table is testimony to the power of these ideas.

If the world has moved on, the summits haven't. The leaders meet, have their photos taken, produce a tedious communiqué about the state of the world economy written several weeks earlier by their mandarins, have their photos taken again and go home.

But the UK has to host the summit, for it comes here on Buggin's turn. So what do you do? Answer: you try and rebrand it; turn it, so to speak, into a new economic summit, something that reflects more accurately what politicians can and cannot do in the economic sphere. Ideas are powerful, not governments; but politicians - if they are very clever - can package and sell ideas. That is how Mr Blair will be trying to refocus the summit this weekend.

Stage one is to cut the thing down to size. No longer will the finance ministers attend. Finance ministers are always irritated when prime ministers and presidents try to muscle in on their territory, bang on about economics, get things wrong and leave them to pick up the debris in the financial markets the week after. So here is a neat solution. Give the

finance ministers their own G7 (i.e. minus Russia), which they had last weekend, and this weekend the bosses can get on without them.

Stage two is only tackle things where joint government action might be helpful. So there will be no grand visionary stuff about the world economy; no wonder-cure for the melt-down in East Asia; no priggish bullying of Japan to try to crank up its economy (the finance ministers had a go at that last weekend). Instead there will be three or four focused policy initiatives where co-operative action might help a bit.

For example, there will be something on fighting organised crime; for the crime industry, like its more conventional cousins, is going global too. There will be something about coordinating help for the weakest economic region in the world, Africa. There will be something on trying to develop policies that will help people who have been left behind in the 1990s boom; but here the emphasis will be on limited "what works" policies, not the "we can give you jobs" approach that has failed so spectacularly on the Continent, and which accounts for the trouble that Chirac and Kohl find themselves in now.

These all make great sense. Crime is already falling in the US and seems to be falling in the UK too, so give the trend a modest push. Large parts of Africa, at last and achingly slowly, are starting to increase living standards after two lost decades, so give that a further push. As for helping the disadvantaged, note the idea is not to promise blanket welfare solutions, but rather to encourage the wider application of solutions which already seem to be working. These, in general, follow the more innovative US experiments (such as the effort in Wisconsin to get everyone who can possibly work into

Ideas are powerful, not governments; but politicians can package and sell ideas

some kind of job), rather than the unaffordable continental European models.

If this seems a US/UK approach both to economics and to social welfare, it is also a US/UK approach to politics. People like Blair and Clinton no longer pretend to be in charge of things over which they have no control. That is a mug's game because you will inevitably disappoint. People like Kohl and Chirac have cottoned on to that yet, which is why Chirac is a lame-duck, forced to co-habit with a leftist prime minister, and Kohl will be almost certainly be defeated this autumn. Instead you acknowledge the limits of power, don't try and fix what ain't broke, identify areas where you can sell an already dominant idea, and get the credit for articulating people's hopes and fears.

What we will get this weekend, if it works, is not just a new economic summit; not just New Labour applying its genius for packaging; but an exercise in new politics. The art is to not do very much, but to tackle a few issues where you are likely to show progress and make that sound brilliant. It is sound-bites, sure, but it is also policy-bites: small, limited initiatives delivered in bite-sized chunks. Watch and be impressed.

Men say one thing and do another - please, tell me something I didn't know



SUZANNE
MOORE

PAUL JOHNSON, "the man who preaches morality to the nation" (in the words of yesterday's *Express*), has apparently been a very naughty boy. He has had an affair for the past 11 years with "freelance journalist" Gloria Stewart, while at the same time ranting on in his inimitable style about family values. I wish, quite honestly, that I was shocked by this news, but, of course, the phenomenon of right-wing men who spout family values in their day jobs and like to be spanked at weekends by their mistresses is one that most of us have become immune to by now.

Somewhere it must be written in the job description of a Tory minister, a successful businessman or a paid moralist that you must have a fragrant wife waiting at home laying out your towels, while you have an affair with your secretary or at least employ a prostitute to degrade you. The sheer predictability of men who dominate public life needing to be dominated in their spare time is as striking as it is loathsome.

The repertoire of male sexual behaviour is so limited, I could almost feel sorry for them. Almost. Actually, I do feel a bit sorry for Johnson's wife, Marigold, but as she has survived 40 years of being married to a man who, depending on your take, is either a passionate polemicist or a degraded eccentric, I am sure she will survive this little hiccup.

Johnson, who has in his time written of the secrets of a successful marriage, is being accused of hypocrisy. He denies this: "I've been having an affair - but I still believe in family values." He admits to being a sinner. Everyone is shouting hypocrisy, especially his mistress who was driven to tape him secretly because, she says, she was angered by the article he wrote on his 40th wedding anniversary. Perhaps this was genuinely the first time she noticed her lover's penchant for saying one thing and doing another.



Much ado about very little: Yesterday's *Express* exposed a case of unsurprising hypocrisy

his completely illogical rants against Michael Grade, Channel 4, anyone with looser morals than his own and whoever else he was paid to maul on behalf of the *Daily Mail*.

Johnson may be a public figure, infamous not only for his vitriol but well documented inaccuracy, but he is not in public office. For many years now the only consistency in Johnson's views has been that they are consistently wrong. However, the aspect of Paul Johnson's private life that I find most depressing is not what he does with his 50-year-old mistress but what he does with Tony Blair.

This one-time admirer of Margaret Thatcher - "She at least gave the impression that we lived in a world of absolute morality, clear distinctions and ethical certainties" - has switched his allegiance to Tony Blair, his new best friend. They lunch together and their tête-à-têtes have led Johnson to conclude that the Prime Minister "is the first top British leader to recognise that family breakdown is right at the centre of our life".

Johnson's own contribution to this cause is now laughable. But as he is also nearly 70 and a grandfather of six he may even qualify as a likable rogue.

As he said to his mistress "Well, I am a very hopeless person, aren't I?"

The only time I ever met him he failed to acknowledge my existence except to shout "lovely girl" across the table every time I managed to open my mouth. Also at the table were Peter Hitchens, AN Wilson and Mary Kenny. Kenny, like Johnson, has also travelled the well-worn route from left-wing youth to right-wing dementia. My problem with these characters is not that they are right-wing or even opposed to much of what I believe, rather that they are so barking it is difficult to understand why they are taken seriously in the first place.

For some time now, Johnson's view of the world has had no internal logic or coherence. He and his camp followers live in a fantasy world which is peopled with politically correct lesbians trying to force veggie-burgers down their throats. They rage against the dying of the Thatcherite light rather than accepting that the world has changed. Even a populist figure such as Richard Littlejohn is these days forced to construct a parallel universe to lambaste in his blokey fashion. Meanwhile, the public is fairly tolerant of homosexual-

ity, abortion, single mothers and even transsexuals winning the Eurovision song contest. The truth is that the threat of rabid loony lefties taking over the world has not been defused by the likes of Johnson but by what in the good old days was their worst nightmare - a Labour government.

That Johnson, with his pernicious hectoring about family values, should be booted with his own petard fulfils a different kind of fantasy altogether. One secretly hopes that the offspring of such rent-a-moralists are addicted to crack, that their wives run off with other women, that they are caught with the hands in the till as well as their trousers round their ankles. Unfortunately they merely have affairs, beg forgiveness and - I predict in Johnson's case - write an article about human frailty and the virtues of Catholicism.

Johnson's idol, Thatcher, was, as we know, perfectly capable of turning a blind eye to the adultery of her ministers. Thatcherism was shot through with such ideological contradictions, indeed it thrived on them. Major had to put up with Mellor, because according to Johnson at the time, "We have a topsy-turvy society in which virtue goes

unrewarded - when it is not actually penalised - and vice versa it ... Adultery pays."

Blair, who would rather remain above the fray, has already been drawn into the murky depths because of Robin Cook. In many eyes, the fall from grace of the arrogant and assured Foreign Secretary came about not because of his "ethical foreign policy" but his perceived lack of ethics when it came to his own domestic crisis.

Johnson managed to huff and puff recently about Cook; but I think that Johnson actually believes what he says - that he does believe in family values even though he has had an affair. He is a man of his generation who may think that the secret of a successful marriage is simply to have a wife who puts up with her husband's peccadilloes.

The publications in which he writes tend also to be of the "Do as I say not what I do" variety. Johnson's advice to Mellor was that he should endeavour "to rehabilitate himself by some worthy activity, involving self-sacrifice". May I suggest that, for once, Johnson walks the walk as well as talks the talk and makes the ultimate self-sacrifice by never writing another word.

What's the hurry to get to France? Take the slow train ...

Stephen Plowden,
says Labour must
learn to say no
to Eurotunnel

THE latest wheeze from Eurotunnel - a road tunnel under the channel - is not an idea that need detain John Prescott long. A road tunnel could have no place in an integrated transport policy based on the selective use of motor vehicles. The idea belongs to the silly season, although it has arrived a little early.

Meanwhile, Mr Prescott is faced with a much more urgent

decision. By the end of this month he has to decide whether to grant London and Cointinental Railways request for an extra subsidy of anything up to £1.2bn to build a high-speed rail link from St Pancras to the Channel Tunnel. If he refuses, that would be the end of the project.

This should really be an easy decision too, since even the money promised to LCR so far cannot possibly be justified. But for Mr Prescott to say that would mean acknowledging Labour's share of responsibility for the present situation.

The public money already promised or given to LCR (but recoverable if the line is not built) comes to £2.4bn. The "justification" for this subsidy

was given in a document laid in Parliament, in March 1996, but never debated. It was claimed that the line would bring benefits to the public worth, in today's terms, just over £7.5bn. But £6bn of this consists of benefits to Eurostar passengers themselves. There is absolutely no reason to subsidise these travellers. They are all likely to be well-off people, and a significant number will not be British taxpayers.

The only items in the document laid in Parliament that would be a legitimate use of public money are economic regeneration, and a reduction in road congestion and environmental damage. But these benefits were calculated to be worth only £750m, not nearly

enough to justify the subsidy.

This figure is not only insufficient, it is also incredible. A 68-mile, high-speed rail link between London and Kent will not improve the environment but will do colossal damage. Nor will it add 75,000 to 80,000 jobs to the economy, as Parliament was asked to believe.

The subsidy to LCR is not the only public cost involved. Compensation for blight also has to be paid. The Conservative Government knew that if proper compensation was paid, the sums involved might sink the project, so it managed to restrict compensation to cases of "extreme and exceptional hardship" and the maximum amount payable to any one person to £5,000.

How did they get away with all this in Parliament? Originally the Conservatives swore that no public money would go into the link. Nevertheless, they wanted it built for reasons of prestige. The journey from Waterloo to the Gare du Nord on the existing track takes only three hours, but it was thought to be an affront to our national pride that the train goes much faster in France than in England.

The Labour Opposition, impressed by the same childish argument, and glad of any stick with which to beat the government, taunted the Conservatives that it was only their ideological free market hang-ups that prevented their backing this glorious technological

marvel with public money. So when the Conservatives changed their minds they knew that they need not fear any scrutiny from the Opposition. In fact, building this link will not bring Britain any prestige, but cancelling it on the grounds that protecting the environment in London and Kent is more important than chopping 30 minutes off the journey between London and Paris would bring us world-wide respect.

LCR's request for yet more money gives John Prescott the opportunity to get out of this misguided project without too much loss of face. New Labour's reputation for environmental concern and financial responsibility depends on his taking it.

Indecent charge

AS A RESULT of his Easter disruption of the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon, gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell is due to appear in Canterbury Magistrate's Court on Friday. The Crown Prosecution Service has changed its original charge of "violent behaviour" to one of "indecent behaviour" under the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act of 1860. Tatchell, who faces two months in prison and who will defend himself in court, told Pandora yesterday, "I was held in a police cell for seven hours while they looked for a suitable offence with which to charge me".

He is very concerned lest people now think "I behaved indecently towards the Archbishop". Tatchell has threatened to subpoena Dr. George

Carey in order to establish that his behaviour was not in any way violent or, presumably, "indecent". However, Tatchell himself is bringing charges against a Canterbury Cathedral official who allegedly punched him. When Pandora rang Lambeth Palace and asked for the Archbishop's thoughts on the Tatchell case, in specific, and church service protests, in general, their press spokesman said that the Archbishop had never made a statement on the subject in the past. Could he not please say something now, Pandora requested. "Unfortunately, he's in Uganda at the moment."

Pray it opens

WHILE we are on holy ground, word

PANDORA Ask Camille

has reached Pandora of a remarkable achievement. According to Russian news wire Itar-Tass, a Russian Orthodox priest has become the first clergyman to reach the North Pole via parachute. Immediately upon landing, Father Viktor Smetanikov planted a cross in the ice and commenced praying. According to the Father Viktor, "The pole has a purifying power. It is an exceptional place on the globe and God doesn't allow anyone to go there." However, he added a cautionary note to any other pilgrims tempted to follow in his footsteps. "Praying at the North Pole doesn't seem particularly beneficial."

King's rescue

And, finally, into cyberspace where the loopy neo-feminist American Camille Paglia, known for her outrageous quotes, outdid herself yesterday in her Web column. While praising Tom Cruise's "boyish beauty" and "splendid body of achievement", she continued, "He is certainly more robustly masculine than that chicken-hearted, butter-nosed baby dyke, Leonardo DiCaprio." Baby dyke? Is Leonardo Dutch?

King's rescue

MOVING from the sacred to the profane, boxing promoter Don King is standing trial in Manhattan for allegedly defrauding Lloyd's with a

bogus \$350,000 insurance claim. The explosively-coiffed King was tried once before on the Lloyd's charge, in 1995. That case ended with a hung jury. Now King may walk free a second time after the prosecution's star witness, former super lightweight champion Julio Cesar Chavez, suddenly decided - right in the middle of his testimony - that it was an ideal time to return to Mexico, despite the kidnapping charge awaiting him on his arrival. Never a dull moment when Doo's around.

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Roddick quits helm at Body Shop

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

ANITA Roddick, the outspoken founder of the Body Shop retail empire, is to relinquish day-to-day control of the company for the first time in the environmentally friendly group's 22-year history. The move follows City disappointment over a sustained period of underperformance caused by the company's poor trading, particularly in the United States.

Ms Roddick, 55, who founded the company with a single store in Littlehampton in 1976, will become co-chairman with her husband Gordon. Patrick Gournay, currently a director of Danone, the French foods group, will become chief executive in July.

Separately, Body Shop is hoping to kick start its loss-making American business by transferring it to a joint venture operation controlled by Adrian Bellamy, one of its non-executive directors. The Roddicks said they were making the changes because they recognised that while they had certain skills they did not have the all-round management expertise to tackle the problems in a business with 1,600 shops spread across dozens of countries.

Commenting on the prospect of handing over the reins at the company she founded, Ms Roddick reacted in typically passionate fashion: "I am not taking a back seat. I have no intention of marginalising myself from this business as a co-working director. I just can't see myself retiring. I will still do what I do best - that's marketing, styling, image, store design and so on."

Asked what her new role as co-chairman would actually mean, she

said: "I have no bloody idea." Gordon Roddick added that his wife's title as chief executive "was always a bit of a misnomer" but that she would continue to have a significant input into the "creative" aspects of the business.

"I loathe financial planning," his wife continued. "Everyone is always talking about budgets. Have you got the budget for this or for that. Perhaps now I'll have a budget of my own."

The changes were greeted with a mixed reception in the City. One analyst said: "It doesn't matter what title Anita has, she will still be bouncing around the business like a pin-ball."

Robert Clark at Corporate Intelligence on Retailing, a retail consultancy, added: "There's little doubt that Body Shop required changes at a senior level. The problems were in orchestrating all the far-flung parts of the business. They needed an organiser, someone with experience on an international level."

Mr Gournay, who was not available yesterday, was described as a

'I'd rather go to the grave knowing that I did what I could rather than looking back and wondering' - Anita Roddick

manager skilled at implementing change programmes at big businesses. He has spent 26 years with Danone, most recently as vice president of its North and South American division.

The Roddicks confirmed they have no intention to revive plans to take the business private, having abandoned the idea in 1995 due to worries over high debt levels. They

Anita Roddick's Rocky Ride



The Early Years

1976 and Anita Roddick opens the first branch of Body Shop in Littlehampton with a loan of £4,000. It co-incides with her husband Gordon spending two years travelling across South America on his back. While he is away she sells half the company to garage owner Ian McGinn. He still owns 28%.

Stock Market Story

Body Shop goes public in 1984 with an initial value of £5m. The shares soar as the environmentally friendly consumers of the 1980s warm to the company's natural cosmetics and anti-animal testing stance. The shares peak at 350p in 1991 making Anita the fourth richest woman in Britain and one of the country's most recognisable entrepreneurs.

The Start of the Slide

The shares are hit by profits warnings and the City begins to fire of Roddick's casual, unorthodox style. The stores in America struggle in the face of fierce competition and UK rivals like Boots and the supermarkets add to the problems with copycat products.

The Buy-Back that never was

Late 1995 and news leaks that the Roddicks had planned to take Body Shop private in a deal that would have valued the company at around £340m. But they abandoned the plans after struggling to raise the finance amid concerns about debt levels. Trading remains weak and the scene is set for Anita to step aside as chief executive.

also said they had no plans to sell their stake and retire. "When you have spawned a business like this it is very difficult to sever the umbilical chord when you haven't quite achieved what you wanted. I'd rather go to the grave knowing that I did what I could rather than looking back and

chairman and a chief executive. Ms Roddick said that although Mr Gournay would be chief executive they had established certain "non-negotiables", such as the company's ethical stance. "Patrick's vision is very closely allied to our own. We are just facing up to the reality that we don't know how to

San Francisco. Basic retail mistakes were also made, such as having too many product lines, in poorly renovated stores with too few products that were tailored for the needs of individual countries.

In America, Body Shop will form a joint venture with a company run by Adrian Bellamy, who became a non-executive director of Body Shop last year. Mr Bellamy, a former chairman of the US duty-free goods retailer DFS will pay \$1m (£600,000) for an option of buying 49 per cent of the US business at net asset value, currently \$49m. These options will be triggered between 2000 and 2002 subject to performance targets.

The company said it had been paying the way for the deal by buying in 68 franchise outlets last year. It said the initiative for the deal had come from Mr Bellamy, who approached the board last year.

The changes were announced as the company announced flat pre-tax

profits of £38m for last year. Like-for-like sales were also flat, reflecting problems in large markets such as America and the Far East.

Losses at the US operation were cut from £3m to £1.7m but like-for-like sales were down by 5 per cent on last year and by 3 per cent in current trading. Same store sales in the Far East are down 14 per cent in current trading, with Japan particularly weak.

Body Shop has set up an internal review to examine its position as a vertically integrated retailer. This could lead to a restructuring of its manufacturing operations. Ms Roddick, who is increasingly concerned about store rents and the power of high street and shopping mall landlords, is keen to put more emphasis on direct selling. She is also keen to expand the Body Shop brand to include leisure services such as "weekend retreats".

Body Shop shares closed a penny higher at 120.5p.

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US set to block sale of Murdoch TV slot

By David Osborne
in New York

THE UNITED STATES government moved last night to bar Rupert Murdoch, the media tycoon, from completing his \$1.1bn (£660m) sale of a key direct satellite broadcasting licence, owned together by the telephone giant, MCI, to Primestar, a cable television consortium.

The action by the US Justice Department is just one more in a string of disasters that have bedevilled Mr Murdoch's ambitions to extend his near-global satellite television empire to the one important market he has not conquered: North America.

Joel Klein, the competition chief at the Justice Department, said in a statement that he was standing in the way of the sale on the grounds it would stifle competition between the cable and satellite industries.

It is likely, however, that Mr Murdoch's News Corp and MCI will move swiftly to appeal the decision. They may be joined in the effort by the members of the Primestar consortium.

The Direct Broadcast Service (DBS) slot is one of only three available for transmissions in the US. Primestar had planned to use it to launch a full-blown direct broadcast service in competition with the two other lone players in the field, DirecTV and EchoStar communications.

Mr Klein was advised by his officials over a month ago that the acquisition of the slot by Primestar would seriously undermine competition between cable and satellite providers in the US. The cable industry is already under attack for raising prices at four times the rate of inflation.

Primestar is owned jointly by Denver-based Tele-Communications Inc - owned by John Malone, a personal friend of Mr Murdoch; Comcast; Time Warner; Cox Communications and MediaOne Group.

"Cable prices continue to increase rapidly and unless this acquisition is blocked, consumers will be denied the benefits of competition: lower prices, more innovation and better services and quality," Mr Klein said.

Underlining that satellite broadcast represented the only effective competition to the cable sector, Mr Klein added: "DBS presents the first real threat to the cable monopoly."

Mr Murdoch has known nothing but frustration in trying to gain a foothold in satellite broadcasting in the US. News Corp and MCI originally set up a joint venture, American Sky Broadcasting, after MCI acquired the precious satellite slot for \$628.5m in 1996.

When MCI lost interest in the venture after becoming a target of corporate takeover, Mr Murdoch changed tack and attempted to acquire Denver-based EchoStar. It was after that deal fell through 12 months ago, that he then agreed with MCI to sell the slot to Primestar.

Reacting to Mr Klein's decision, EchoStar spokeswoman, Karen Watson, said: "The Justice Department made the right decision for competition and the consumer." There was no comment from News Corp.

The action was felt meanwhile in the bond market, where Primestar had been expected yesterday to make its debut with a \$400m junk bond deal. The deal was delayed, however.

NatWest calls the future on a mobile

By Lea Paterson

THE PROSPECT of being able to run a bank account using a mobile phone moved a step nearer yesterday when NatWest joined forces with a telecoms company.

NatWest and European Telecom have set up a new company, a 50/50 joint venture called Lifestyle Communications, to develop and market mobile phone banking services in the UK.

Lifestyle's first product, a pre-paid mobile telephony service which allows NatWest customers to check balance details, is due out later this summer.

The company intends to research and develop integrated mobile phone and banking services. It predicts customers will eventually be able to use their mobile phone to pay directly for goods and services.

Customers should also be able to settle bills, move money between accounts and could even be able to download electronic cash.

Warren Hardy, chairman and chief executive of European Telecom, said: "The technology NatWest has been working will enable people to

buy and pay for services via their Sim card [the card that slots into mobile phones and allows access to mobile phone networks]."

Steve Adams, head of IT at NatWest Card Services and chairman of Lifestyle, said: "I firmly believe that the technology required for telephony, card payment and card-based services is a key area for future development."

Lifestyle's customers will initially be able to use their pre-paid mobile phone only to check their NatWest balances and details of their last transaction. However, Mr Hardy claims the company already has the technology to allow customers to "top-up" their pre-paid air time using a traditional credit or debit card. Rather than buying pre-paid "vouchers" for airtime, customers will be able to top up credit by punching card details into the mobile phone.

The concept of mobile phone banking is not new. Barclaycard has an alliance with Cellnet and last year launched a mobile phone which allows Barclaycard customers to check their account details. Barclays has also signalled its intention

to continue developing so-called "value-added" mobile phone services.

Lifestyle says its new product, unlike that of Barclaycard, does not tie customers to one particular handset or one particular network. Mr Hardy also said Lifestyle was set on taking the mobile phone banking concept "several stages further".

He claimed the company was as little as 12 months away from developing a combined credit and Sim card - a card that slots into the mobile phone, allows access to the network and also serves as a debit or credit card. Once this happens, the possibilities are endless, says Lifestyle.

Customers will be able to pay for their mobile phone airtime "as they go". The cost of the airtime will, via the technology contained in the Sim card, be automatically deducted from the customer's account.

But, according to Lifestyle, the possibilities do not end there. Once the combined Sim/credit or debit card is in place, customers will be able to pay for goods and services directly without the need for reading out card details over the telephone.

Celsis chief quits to mount a bid

By Peter Thal Larsen

THE CHIEF executive of Celsis yesterday left the troubled manufacturer of contamination test kits to prepare a takeover bid for the company.

Shares in Celsis surged 8.5p to 41p as it announced that Arthur Holden, its chief executive of the past three and a half years, had resigned due to a conflict of interest. "Mr Holden has informed the Board of his interest in exploring options such as acquiring or taking the company private," Celsis said in a statement.

Following the move, Jack Rowell, the former England rugby coach who was previously non-executive chairman, will take over as acting chief executive. Meanwhile Chris Evans, the biotechnology entrepreneur, becomes chairman.

Mark Harris, Celsis's finance director, said Mr Holden's interest in mounting a bid for the company had only come to light in the past



Jack Rowell: Takes over as acting chief executive

few days. However, he added that there was "nothing on the table" yet.

Mr Holden was yesterday understood to be in London attempting to drum up support for a potential offer.

However, his interest may finish out other potential bidders. Mr Harris yesterday revealed that Celsis had received "one or two enquiries" from other companies, although he added that these were "nothing substantial".

Celsis's share price has slumped from over 100p to 32.5p this year as the company has issued two profit warnings. The company yesterday confirmed those warnings by reporting a loss before taxation and exceptional costs of £0.4m for the year to 31 March. Revenues increased by 46 per cent to £16.2m.

Bell Canada to sell CWC stake

By Peter Thal Larsen

BELL CANADA, the telecoms giant, yesterday put its 14.25 per cent stake in telecom operator Cable & Wireless Communications up for sale just two months after insisting it had "no plans" to sell the stake.

Shares in CWC dropped 9.5p to 44.2p as Bell said that it would use the proceeds from the sale to pay down debt and fund investments in its core businesses.

Bell declined to say when or how the sale would take place. However, it is most likely that the shares will be placed with institutional investors.

At yesterday's closing price, the stake is valued at almost £940m.

Meanwhile Cable & Wireless, CWC's major shareholder with a 52.6 per cent stake, said it would participate in the placing process. The telecoms giant can raise its shareholding in CWC with approval from the other major shareholders. Bell Atlantic, the US group, holds 18.5 per cent of the shares.

A spokesman for Bell said plans for the sale had been drawn up in the past few weeks following the conclusion of a strategic review. He said the proceeds would help fund re-

cent investments in Bell's wholly owned satellite telecom and information systems operations.

Observers said the sale was also likely to have been inspired by a change of management. Last week Bell confirmed that Jean Moity, its chief operating officer, was to become chief executive.

James Ross, telecom analyst at ABN Amro, CWC's stockbroker, said: "This announcement comes at a fortuitous time. Institutional confidence in CWC is now much better than it was before, and a lot more people are confident about the company's prospects."

CWC was created last year by a merger of Mercury, the long-distance operator, and cable companies Bell Cablemedia, Nynex and Videotex. After a disappointing start the shares have performed strongly in recent months as CWC has restructured and announced plans to launch digital television services. They have more than doubled in value since last November.

Observers said that a placing was likely to be well received by institutions, who have complained of a lack of liquidity in the shares. At the moment, just 14.7 per cent of CWC's shares are publicly traded.

Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5968.70	-71.60	-1.19	6150.50	4382.80	3.51
FTSE 250	3779.70	-7.30	-0.13	3772.40	3384.20	2.80
FTSE 350	2696.50	-27.30	-0.94	2698.70	2141.80	3.39
FTSE All Share	2820.09	-24.31	-0.86	2861.12	2102.59	3.35
FTSE SmallCap	2739.10	10.20	0.37	2728.90	1922.10	2.92
FTSE Biotech	1484.80	6.20	0.43	1453.80	1226.20	3.08
FTSE AIM	1102.00	3.70	0.34	1059.30	955.90	1.06
FTSE EURO 100	1012.78	-9.49	-0.93	1021.51	897.32	1.58
Dow Jones	9085.11	-17.89	-0.20	9109.79	8446.21	0.99
Nikkei	15322.48	-59.42	-0.39	15320.31	7909.13	4.07
Hang Seng	9841.51	-254.86	-2.59	10320.31	7909.13	4.07
Dax	5297.35	-44.34	-0.83	5442.00	3457.24	1.52

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling				UK 10 year gilt				US long bond			
Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg
3 month	7.44	0.84	1.14	0.82	5.80	-1.08	-5.83	5.83	-1.23	5.83	-1.23
6 month	5.88	-0.12	-2.04	-0.20	5.76	-0.86	-6.92	-0.86	-0.86	-0.86	-0.86
1 year	5.54	-0.05	-0.93	-0.30	5.67	-1.22	-2.16	-1.15	-1.15	-1.15	-1.15
2 year	5.64	0.46	8.25	0.80	5.04	-0.66	-5.61	-0.87	-0.87	-0.87	-0.87
BOND YIELDS											
Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg
Northern Rock	213.50	12.00	5.96	498.50	-28.00	-11.69	-11.69	187.00	-8.00	-4.29	-4.29
First Direct	532.50	27.50	5.45	178.50	-8.00	-4.29	-4.29	178.50	-8.00	-4.29	-4.29
Barclay	1095.00	48.00	4.58	720.00	-31.00	-4.13	-4.13	720.00	-31.00	-4.13	-4.13
Gen Cable	187.00	8.50	4.51	1076.00	-46	-4.13	-4.13	1076.00	-46	-4.13	-4.13
Barclay GPP	1113.00	45.00	4.21	499.00	-20.5	-3.95	-3.95	499.00	-20.5	-3.95	-3.95

CURRENCIES

Currency	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Currency	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg
£/\$	1.8345	+0.00	1.8229	0.07	\$/£	0.5457	-0.01	0.5489	-0.06
£/DM	2.3007	+0.19	2.7827	-1.78	DM/£	0.4346	-0.01	0.4346	-0.01
£/¥	218.90	+12.30	183.67	19.04	¥/£	0.0046	+0.01	0.0046	+0.01
£/A\$	103.10	+0.20	98.50	4.67	A\$/£	0.0097	-0.01	0.0097	-0.01
OTHER INDICATORS									
Indicator	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Indicator	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg
US GDP (Q1)	14.59	0.20	18.52	-22.29	US GDP (Q4)	114.80	2.80	117.48	-2.29
US GDP (Q3)	298.25	-1.80	347.65	-14.22	US GDP (Q2)	160.80	3.50	155.36	3.50
US GDP (Q1)	14.59	0.20	18.52	-22.29	US GDP (Q4)	114.80	2.80	117.48	-2.29
US GDP (Q3)	298.25	-1.80	347.65	-14.22	US GDP (Q2)	160.80	3.50	155.36	3.50
US GDP (Q1)	14.59	0.20	18.52	-22.29	US GDP (Q4)	114.80	2.80	117.48	-2.29
US GDP (Q3)	298.25	-1.80	347.65	-14.22	US GDP (Q2)	160.80	3.50	155.36	3.50

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg	Country	Rate	Change	Yr Ago	% Chg
Australia (\$)	2.4832				Malta (lira)	0.6189			
Austria (schillings)	19.78				Mexican (nuevo peso)	12.61			
Belgium (francs)	58.19				Netherlands (guilders)	3.1753			
Canada (\$)	2.2802				New Zealand (\$)	2.0278			
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8256				Norway (krone)	11.85			
Denmark (krone)	10.81				Portugal (escudos)	286.04			
Finland (markka)	8.2206				Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.9549			
France (francs)	9.4590				Singapore (\$)	2.5418			
Germany (marks)	2.8293				Spain (pesetas)	239.24			
Greece (drachmas)	487.85				South Africa (rand)	7.9458			
Hong Kong (\$)	12.28				Sweden (krona)	12.15			
Ireland (pounds)	1.1187				Switzerland (francs)	2.3641			
India (rupees)	58.74				Thailand (bahts)	57.08			
Israel (shekels)	5.5846				Turkey (liras)	393251			
Italy (lira)	2791				USA (\$)	1.5864			
Japan (yen)	213.29								
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.9554								

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Vaux profits fall flat

SUNDERLAND may be vying for promotion back to the Premier League but Vaux, the brewing to hotels group that sponsors them, has produced a decidedly second division performance in recent years. As the table and graph opposite shows, the group's lacklustre profits growth has seen its shares underperform the market by almost 50 per cent since 1993.

Vaux, like all the regional brewers, has struggled to cope with the decline in beer sales and the growth in market share that the large brewers have managed to secure by pouring huge amounts of money behind their leading brands.

The big rivals have also been able to turn the screw on Vaux's managed-pub profits by investing billions of pounds in their own chains at the expense of the traditional local Vaux's own efforts to develop pub brands have been meagre by comparison. The stark contrast between the 15 per cent rise in pub profits which Whitbread announced earlier this month and the flat profits Vaux achieved tells its own story.

Vaux has been able to seek solace at its hotels division. Its Swallow Hotels business, already a well-run operation, has grown rapidly thanks to the upturn in the hotels cycle. But Vaux cannot rely on hotels for ever. That particular market is already showing some signs of flattening out.

Vaux's underlying pre-tax profits for the six months to March rose 8 per cent to £16.6m, but the overriding impression from the group's results presentation yesterday was that it will have to run increasingly hard to stand still.

The imminent appointment of a new chief executive could help reform this family-run group and revitalise the possibility of a break-up. But, with one half of the business obviously struggling, even that is not the attractive prospect it once was.

Vaux's shares slipped another 3p to 267.5p yesterday. ABN Amro Hoare Govett forecasts current-year profits of £40.1m, putting the shares on a prospective price-earnings ratio of 12. Despite trading on a large discount to the market Vaux still looks high enough.

Vaux: At a glance

Market value: £294m, share price 267.5p (-3p)

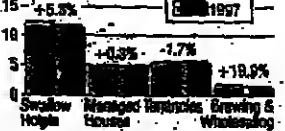
Five-year record	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Turnover (£m)	250	283	290	124	136
Pre-tax profits (£m)	31.8	34.8	38.8	15.2	15.8
Earnings per share (p)	18.3	20.8	23.4	8.33	8.64
Dividends per share (p)	10.2	10.8	11.1	3.75	3.85

Vaux v market

Released to May 1993



Operating profit



Pricey paper at Taylor

FOR EVIDENCE of overheating in the new issues market, look no further than the flotation of Taylor & Francis. Institutions have been scrambling for shares in the scientific and technical publisher, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year.

Yesterday, the group announced that its - admittedly modest - share issue was approximately 10-times oversubscribed. This means that a business which was originally supposed to be valued at about £100m will actually be worth almost 30 per cent more when its shares start trading at 200p on Monday.

This is good news for the existing shareholders - mostly family trusts and a few venture capital groups - who have admirably resisted the temptation to cash in. In fact, just 18 per cent of the shares will be publicly traded when dealings begin. But it also begs the question whether the publishing group deserves to be valued so close to 20 per cent premium to the rest of the market.

True, the likes of Reed Elsevier have proved just how lucrative scientific publishing can be. When it comes to squeezing the most out of its subscribers, however, Taylor still has plenty to do. Margins on its journals are currently just half the 40 per cent Reed consistently manages to make out of scientific publications.

Taylor also has its work cut out on the books side. The section, which contributed about a third of revenues but almost no profit last year, is being reorganised. Analysts think Taylor should eventually be able to make margins of about 5 per cent, offering plenty of prospects for growth. The chief executive, Tony Selvey, is also bullish about acquisitions, though the risk remains that,

faced with competition from larger groups, he will be tempted to overpay.

But, at the moment, much of this potential has to be taken on trust. Taylor & Francis is a solid business, but the shares are not worth chasing.

Marginal lift at Westbury

TO some extent, Westbury, the housebuilder, has been a victim of its own success. After a strong rise in house prices the City is wondering just how long the upturn can continue. The recovery has revived the spectre of the 1980s property crash and held back the whole sector.

And for five years now Westbury has pursued a strategy of increasing earnings by improving margins rather than rushing out to boost volumes. Sceptical investors are beginning to ask how it can keep profits motoring without building many more homes.

So far, Westbury has managed to confound its critics. Earnings in the year to February rose by 35 per cent to £30.6m despite a 3 per cent fall in volumes.

And its results lend support to its argument that the housing market is not getting out of control. Prices are rising 5 per cent across the country. Taking the frothy London market out of the equation and that figure falls to 4 per cent, a rate that looks sustainable. Westbury's three-year land bank is also a comfort if prices carry on rising.

Shares in Westbury rose yesterday to 262.5p from 259.5p, valuing it at £292m. On forecast earnings of £45m, or 28p a share, that puts it on a multiple of 9.4. Given Westbury trades below the housing sector average of 10.5, which itself is very lowly rated, its shares look good value.

Insurance rates crisis hits profits at Sedgwick Group

By Andrew Verity

INSURERS are being forced to take losses just to hang on to business. Sedgwick Group said yesterday as it announced a 19 per cent drop in first-quarter profits.

The country's biggest broker said conditions in the London market for general insurance were hitting a nadir as underwriters struggled to keep their clients on board.

Stuart Tarrant, finance director, said: "The London market is in an absolutely parlous state as far as rates are concerned. That is where the prob-

lem is. As at the moment the rates are so bad that if they don't turn around by the end of the year then the London market will have problems - and we know the problems it has had."

Sedgwick disappointed the City with a worse-than-expected fall in pre-tax profits to £35.3m before exceptional, compared with £43.5m in the same period last year.

Sedgwick Ltd, the group's general insurance broking arm, saw revenues fall by 3 per cent in the teeth of tough market conditions. A disposal of its Netherlands business at the end of the first quarter last year

depressed income, while a joint venture in Italy has yet to produce its full benefits.

The group saw profits hit by £2.5m because of the effect of the strong pound on its overseas operations. Without the impact of sterling, the group's broking income would have increased by 3 per cent to £231.5m.

Sax Riley, chairman of Sedgwick, said: "These results are in line with our expectations which took account of the continuing decline of insurance rates in the international markets. We remain confident about the group's underlying

trading performance for 1998 as a whole."

But Rob White-Cooper, chief executive, admitted the group would be affected by heated competition in London market insurance rates. "We are still seeing very material reductions coming through in classes like aviation, energy and marine for the second, third year in a row."

Sedgwick has increasingly shifted towards fee income rather than commissions, which have dwindled as insurers have struggled to undercut each other. Sedgwick Noble Lowndes, its employee benefits

consultancy, now brings in 25 per cent of its income.

However, SNL is also set to incur a hefty £35m charge for the second stage of the pension re-selling review. SNL has warned that this figure could be exceeded.

Sedgwick shares slid by 35p yesterday to close at 154p, valuing the group at £872m.

In a separate development, Lloyd's of London renewed its call for a "fundamental reappraisal" of the way the market works. Max Taylor, chairman, said the market needed to simplify its structures in a bid to boost competitiveness.



(From left) publishing director Stephen Neal, chief executive Tony Selvey, sales and marketing director Roger Horton, and finance director Tony Foye of Taylor & Francis, which yesterday announced that its flotation had been about 10 times oversubscribed. Mr Selvey said the scientific and technical publishing group was prepared to spend up to £100m on acquisitions. "We are looking at half a dozen targets," he said. "The flotation allows us to pursue them with more vigour."

The company celebrates its 200th anniversary this year. The flotation values Taylor & Francis at £129.3m, compared with earlier estimates of about £100m.

The families of several academics who invested in the business when it turned itself into a private company in the 1930s have been made multi-millionaires by the flotation. Most shareholders are holding on to the majority of their shares, however. The placing raised £13.7m, net of expenses, for the company.

Investment Column, this page
Photograph: Neville Elder

Applied Power raises bid for Vero to £116m

THE BATTLE for control for Vero Group, the electronic components firm, escalated yesterday, when Applied Power trumped its rival with a higher bid that has won the support of the target company's board.

Vero announced it had agreed to a £115.5m offer from Applied Power, which is a diversified engineering company. Applied Power had earlier made a £94.4m bid for Vero on 23 April but was trumped by a £102.2m bid from another US company, Peotair.

The offer values each Vero share at 192p. Vero shares were quoted 135p, or 6 per cent higher, at 195.5p by the close of business today.

Vero said the offer repre-

sented a premium of about 61.3 per cent to the closing middle market quotation of 119p per Vero share on 19 March, the business day preceding the announcement of the approach. Applied Power expects its improved offer, though higher than its earlier one, would be accretive to earnings per share in the first full year of ownership.

The company, however, said that the statement did not mean that its future earnings per share would be necessarily greater than its EPS for the financial year to 31 August, 1997. Vero's directors, representing 16.4 per cent of shares, have already given undertaking to the offer.

Brian Gay, Vero's group managing director, said the increased offer "represents a significant uplift to both the original Allied Power cash offer of 157p per share and the Pentair cash offer of 170p per share" and that the board was therefore recommending the offer.

Richard Sim, chairman and chief executive of Allied Power, said he was delighted Vero's board had recommended the offer. "APW strongly believes that the acquisition of Vero will create significant value, as Vero will both receive benefits from and provide benefits to Allied Power's custom electronic enclosure and Wright Line businesses," he said.

Bid battle for Courtaulds looms as PPG confirms talks

A BIDDING war for one of Britain's oldest companies was set to break out after US paints and glass group PPG Industries confirmed yesterday it was in talks with Courtaulds, the coatings and fibres company. PPG has teamed up with the US investment bank Donaldson Lufkin & Jenrette in the approach. PPG said if the talks led to an offer it would retain the coating business and DLJ would acquire the remaining businesses. Courtaulds, which has already agreed a bid from the Dutch chemicals group Akzo Nobel, on Monday revealed a second bid approach from an unnamed third party which it said could make an offer above that of Akzo's.

UK acquisitions fall in 1998

EXPENDITURE on acquisitions of UK companies by other UK companies in the first three months of 1998 fell from the high value recorded in the previous quarter. The value in the fourth quarter of 1997 was the highest ever recorded at £16.3bn and was largely attributable to the acquisition of Grand Metropolitan by Guinness. Expenditure on acquisitions in the UK by overseas companies increased to £9.2bn in the first quarter from £3.7bn in the previous quarter, reflecting three large transactions.

Regions see production grow

THREE of Britain's 11 regions, the South-west, East Midlands and Scotland, have bucked the trend in manufacturing and enjoyed strong growth in orders and output during the past four months. These were also the most affected by skills shortages. The others all saw production fall, with the steepest declines in the North and the North-west. Looking ahead to the next four months, businesses in Northern Ireland are the most optimistic, according to a report yesterday from the CBI and Business Strategies.

Cobham pays £40m for Conax

COBHAM, the aeronautical components and systems supplier, is to buy Conax Corp of the US for £40.5m in cash. It plans to place 4.6 million new Cobham shares for cash at 1.07p each to raise around £49.6m. The proceeds will be used mainly to finance the acquisition of Conax, which manufactures electro-explosive actuated devices, gas storage release systems and oxygen delivery systems.

Soda Ash buys Brunner Mond

SODA ASH Investments, an acquisition vehicle with backing from CVC Capital, has made an agreed 190p-a-share offer for Brunner Mond, valuing the chemicals group at about £145m.

Midland creates 300 jobs

MIDLAND Bank is creating 300 new jobs with the expansion of its fourth telephone handling centre in Edinburgh, which was officially opened yesterday. The centre took its first calls at the end of last September and currently employs 300 people.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover	Pre-tax	EPS	Dividend
Barton Holdings (p)	2.40m (2.01m)	3.6m (15.74m)	12.5p (6.53p)	6.5p (6.5p)
BOC (p)	1.80m (1.78m)	1.78m (216.4m)	23.8p (26.37p)	15.4p (1)
City Store (p)	285.7m (270.8m)	38.0m (37.7m)	11.8p (8.2p)	5.6p (1.7p)
Colson (p)	11.7m (11.72m)	0.85m (5.58p)	0.85p (5.58p)	1.1p (1.7p)
Development Securities (p)	11.35m (12.38m)	1.20m (1.05m)	1.20p (1.05p)	1.20p (1.05p)
Johns & Matfield (p)	11.35m (11.70m)	0.58m (0.46m)	1.20p (1.13p)	4.5p (1)
MBT Computers (p)	15.9m (10.7m)	0.25m (2.40m)	22.2p (11.3p)	4.5p (1)
Novus Energy Ltd (p)	6.7m (7.33m)	0.37m (0.94m)	12.64p (17.17p)	2.50p (1.0p)
Sedgwick (p)	242.9m (244.4m)	35.3m (43.5m)	8.6p (5.3p)	1.1p (1.7p)
West Holdings (p)	6.65m (5.76m)	0.85m (0.77m)	5.36p (4.70p)	1.2p (1.7p)
Vero Group (p)	122.1m (102.2m)	15.37m (15.21m)	8.64p (6.33p)	2.85p (5.7p)
WTI (p)	11.1m (11.1m)	0.4m (1.5p)	1.5p (1.5p)	1.5p (1.5p)

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Taylor & Francis Group plc

(Incorporated in England and Wales, registered number 2280993)



Placing

by

Hoare Govett Corporate Finance Limited

of 12,135,299 Ordinary Shares of 5p each

at 200p per share

Share capital immediately following the Placing

Number	Amount	Issued and fully paid	Number	Amount
105,000,000	£5,250,000	Ordinary Shares of 5p each	64,662,900	£3,233,145

Taylor & Francis Group plc and the ordinary shares of 5p each in the Company are described in a document (the "Listing Particulars") dated 12 May 1998. The Listing Particulars have been prepared in accordance with the listing rules of the London Stock Exchange and have been delivered to the Registrar of Companies for England and Wales in accordance with Section 149 of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Copies of the Listing Particulars are available (on payment of a fee, for collection only during normal business hours), up to and including 14 May 1998, from the Company Announcements Office, London Stock Exchange, Old Broad Street, London EC2N 1HP and (free of charge) during normal business hours, up to and including 26 May 1998, from the registered office of the Company at 1 Gunpowder Square, London EC4A 3DE.

13 May 1998

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



SIR WILLI Purves, who is due to retire as chairman of HSBC at the end of the month, yesterday lost his chance to become the next chairman of the British Horseracing Board (BHB), the shadowy body which runs racing in this country.

The BHB's nine-strong committee decided at their meeting in Portman Square, London, to appoint millionaire entrepreneur Peter Savill as chairman instead.

Not that "officially" anything happened at all. So opaque is the horse racing set-up, so mired in the past, that "officially" there wasn't even an election, let alone a list of candidates

or a formal vote. The problem is that a chairman has never been selected before.

Lord Hartington was the first chairman, when the Jockey Club set the BHB up. His successor, Lord Wakeham, popped up unopposed at the prompting of a government committee. When Lord Wakeham announced he wanted to step down, all sorts of names were touted to replace him, including Sir Peter Middleton, chairman of Barclays Capital.

But yesterday Mr Savill, who made a £40m fortune through publishing and tourism in the Caribbean, came from behind to beat Sir Willi by a head.

Sir Willi, 67, former chairman of the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, said he "congratulated Peter Savill on his election as chairman of the BHB and wished him every success in what is a challenging and important position for British horseracing."

A spokesman for Sir Willi, when asked what the former chairman will do instead when he retires, said: "He hasn't said yet. Of course, right up until the minute of his retirement he will devote all his energies to the interests of the shareholders of HSBC."

SAVE Scribbles! Down with the Corporation!

Let me explain this insurrectionary outburst. Scribbles Cellar, the private members' club off Fleet Street which hosts the Stock Market Reporters' Club, is to close.

And, if that isn't bad enough, the

Carmelite Street boozer and talking shop is to shut its doors at the orders of the Corporation of London, so that the building can be redeveloped.

This has all the makings of a classic PR disaster. The City Corporation has managed to alienate all the journalists in London working as market reporters in one fell swoop. Where will the Club's meetings on the last Thursday of each month be held now?

John Arthur, who helped set up Scribbles 21 years ago and has owned it for the last 10 years, said yesterday: "The Corporation served notice on us last December to terminate the lease in June. This is despite the fact that they [the Corporation] haven't put in for planning permission yet. I've found it extremely difficult to find out what's going on. It's a great shame."

Mr Arthur says he has been "inundated" by over 50 members offering to petition the Corporation to save Scribbles.

"I've found it extremely difficult to get an explanation from them [the Corporation] on what's going on.... We've had no contact with any developers... the Corporation, as usual, has been totally obtuse." Mr Arthur concluded bitterly.

A spokeswoman for the Corporation did try to get a comment for me yesterday, but was unable to do so at the time of going to press. In the meantime - anyone got some club premises going cheap?

GAVIN Hastings, former captain of

Scotland, The British Lions and all-round rugby hero, is leading up a new joint venture in public relations in Edinburgh.

The moose-capped Scottish full back retired from international rugby by after the last World Cup two and a half years ago, and since then has been building up his own sports consultancy, Hastings International, through which he brokers sponsorship deals for people like the Scottish cricket team.

Now he has teamed up with the London-based PR outfit Craigie Taylor International to form Craigie Hastings, which will operate independently of Hastings International.

"My profile up here should help open doors to clients," says Gavin. "There's a tremendous buzz in Scotland linked with the new Scottish Parliament. As far as this business goes, the sky's the limit."

As for playing the game, Gavin has only donned a rugby shirt in anger twice this year, including last Saturday when he played in a benefit for his old colleague Derek White.

I wonder if he will cross paths with Jack Rowell, the former England rugby manager who yesterday moved sideways from being chairman to acting chief executive at Celsis, the troubled drug company?

As Celsis's former chief executive, Arthur Holden, prepares a bid for the underperforming company, I'm sure Big Jack could use all the positive spin he can get.

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is as PPG confirms

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ms see production

am pays £40m for Cos

Ash buys BrunnerMa

nd creates 335 jobs



OUTLOOK ON THE CITY'S UNDERWRITING CARTEL: HOW THE GOVERNMENT IS IN A MUDDLE OVER ENERGY; AND BODY SHOP'S PROBLEMS

These City ways are an economic liability

THE PROVISIONAL set of proposals published this week by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for tackling the City underwriting cartel has received an astonishingly mixed press (some of it downright hostile) for what, on the face of it, seems a considered and entirely reasonable response to a very clear and old-established abuse — that of fixed commissions for a usually exclusive group of City cronies.

Denise Kingsmill, the lawyer chairing the inquiry, must be wondering what she did to deserve the scorn being poured on her, especially since in a rare display of glasnost the MMC is breaking with precedent to publish its provisional findings so they can be properly debated publicly before a decision is made on whether to act.

Admittedly, the underwriting cartel is a problem largely in abeyance right now. In part this is because City practitioners have responded to the threat of action by reforming their ways, but it is mainly to do with the fact that there simply aren't many rights issues of size being launched these days. It may well be that even if they were to return in a big way — which doesn't look likely given the present trend among companies to redeem their capital — that things have moved on and the old system would have broken down anyway. All the same, we can't rely on that happening.

No anti-competitive practice of this type deserves any kind of place in a modern free market economy. There are obviously much deeper and more important causes for Britain's post-war industrial decline than the City underwriting cartel, but it may have been a minor bit player in the sorry roll call of vest-

ed interest which has so severely stunted our economic progress. Certainly the system has not generally been in the wider interests of the British economy, and by encouraging wasteful and inefficient allocation of capital, it is not entirely clear it has acted in the interests of big institutional investors either.

That these vaguely corrupt, cronyish, City ways should continue to find their supporters, not just among those who benefit from them, but in usually right thinking politicians and commentators too is indicative of just how much of a task there remains to be done in preparing the British economy for the twenty-first century. Outside the Chancellor's office, which seems to recognise the importance of these things, there is little evidence of the new Government pursuing reform with the vigour and urgency required. The Competition Bill is obviously an important advance on what went before, but the government has pulled its punches on a range of issues (predatory pricing being just one) thereby wasting the opportunity for root and branch reform of competition policy.

The contrast with the United States Justice Department, which is turning on two of the country's most successful companies — Microsoft and Intel — in pursuit of its trust busting traditions, could hardly be greater. Would the competition authorities here in Britain have acted with the decisiveness of yesterday's action by the US Justice Department to block Rupert Murdoch's sale of satellite capacity to cable TV operators? Now why does that seem so unlikely?

Repeatedly the US has waged war on its dominant suppliers and cartels, it has bro-

ken up its monopolies and banished its price fixers. Meanwhile, the US economy has not only survived these onslaughts, but it has prospered and flourished. Might there not be the tiniest, weeny bit of a connection between these two things?

Coal puts Labour in a hole

THE GOVERNMENT's apparent determination to save the British coal industry is turning into an interesting test of its commitment to free and open markets. The choice lies between fixing the electricity generating market to ensure a guaranteed tonnage of coal sales or sticking with the idea that competition between energy sources is the best means of achieving lower prices.

Somewhere between these two positions, there is also a debate going on about energy policy. Should Britain allow itself to become as dependent on natural gas for its electricity generating needs as it once was on coal? The arguments for guaranteeing coal a fixed share on grounds of security of supply and diversity of supply are weak. Gas is plentiful, it is not vulnerable to interruption through industrial action and gas-fired plants are capable of being modified to burn coal.

Despite this, ministers seem inclined to do something for coal. And it is leading them into dangerous territory. The idea of a moratorium on any further gas-fired power stations, say for five years, now appears to be common ground between the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. What

now appears to have been added to the agenda is the idea of withdrawing consents which have already been granted for gas-fired plants.

In the short-term, this will do little for the coal industry. There is already enough gas-fired capacity actually under construction to displace the output of five or six large pits. But what it would do is halt the march of gas and guarantee at least a residual market for coal. Ministers should think very carefully before intervening in this way. Apart from making their environmental targets harder to achieve, it would send out all the wrong messages about the government's attitude to inward investment and open markets. Miners jobs would be saved for a while but at a much greater cost to Britain's longer-term interests.

Anita can't cut the umbilical cord

ANITA Roddick isn't often wheeled out at City presentations these days. Most of the time she prefers to be half way up the Amazon or some such place, searching for the next job. But we got her in full flow yesterday with all the New Age mumbo jumbo that has made her such a handful for the "pin-striped dinosaurs" of the City she loves so little.

Instead of the boring management speak uttered by most chief executives we had Anita on hand ("so useful") umbilical chords (the business is her baby) and "shopping mall terrorism" (don't ask). No wonder she and the City never got on. Neither party can have a single clue what the other is talking about. In her new role as co-chairman we may

be seeing even less of Ms Roddick in the Square Mile from now on. This is a shame in some ways but investors in this underperforming company might wonder whether yesterday's management restructuring will really change anything.

For a start, Body Shop now looks awfully crowded at the top. We have two executive co-chairmen (Gordon and Anita), an executive deputy chairman and a new chief executive. The Roddicks say they will not interfere but it is really likely in an entrepreneurial business where the two founders are both on the board and have a 26 per cent stake?

All this is not to say that changes were not necessary if Body Shop is to remain a public company. It has become increasingly clear that the existing management does not have the range of skills to manage an empire that takes in manufacturing and retailing and sprawls across continents. Manufacturing will now be reviewed and the US business is being placed under a joint venture. More changes will follow. Body Shop could eventually end up as more of a brand manager, like Virgin, than an operator of stores, factories and so on.

Unfortunately, none of this resolves the core issue of ownership. The Roddicks say they abandoned plans to take Body Shop private three years ago because they did not want to swap one set of landlords (brokers and investors) for another (bankers looking after their mezzanine finance). What they have now is an uneasy compromise. They remain a quoted PLC, but everyone knows they don't feel comfortable with it. Not a happy state of affairs.

BOC pledges radical review as profits dive

By Andrew Yates

BOC, the troubled international gases company, yesterday announced a far ranging review into its entire business designed to stem a rapid decline in its profits. The review is likely to lead to a radical shake-up of the group in an effort to slash costs.

The announcement came as BOC revealed a 17 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to £179.8m for the six months to March due to the economic turmoil in Asia and the strong pound.

BOC is looking at implementing a more centralised operational structure to keep a tight rein on costs. The group may also embark on a large

scale disposal programme or slim down some of its worst performing units, which would inevitably involve job cuts.

Prime candidates for reform include BOC's chilled food division and its French distribution operation, Danny Rosenkrantz, BOC's chief executive, said yesterday the two business had plunged into the red over the last few months. The chilled food division encountered problems after taking on a loss-making contract and the French business has been hit by difficult local economic conditions.

As the biggest specialty gases producer in Asia, BOC has been badly affected by the economic crisis in the region. The group predicted yesterday

that the turmoil in the Far East is far from over, with the Japanese economy at severe risk of falling into recession.

BOC has been vulnerable to the sharp rise in the value of the pound, which wiped another £13m off its pre-tax profits in the six-month period. The crash in the world-wide semiconductor market has also battered profits at its vacuum technology business, which is heavily dependent on the sector.

BOC has already embarked on a large programme to improve the efficiency of the business but its latest initiative will dramatically accelerate this process. The group is also looking for acquisitions after recently selling Olmeda, its

healthcare business, for £630m.

Mr Rosenkrantz said yesterday: "The sale of Olmeda was a key moment in the history of BOC. Now we have got to sort out how we are going to run the rest of the business. We have got to get more improvements."

BOC has underperformed the FTSE 100 by around a fifth over the last 12 months after problems in Asia left it with a gloomy earnings outlook. Analysts cut current-year profit forecasts by another £35m to £420m. However, its shares rose 3.5p to 976p as the City welcomed the group's move to unveil the results of its review by August.

BMW rules out higher Rolls offer

By Michael Harrison

BMW yesterday ruled out making an increased offer for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars as the cat-and-mouse game with Volkswagen for control of the luxury car maker continued.

Speaking at the group's annual shareholders meeting in Munich, Bernd Pischetsrieder, the chairman of BMW said: "Under no circumstances will we change our offer for Rolls-Royce."

But he said that BMW, whose £340m offer was topped by one of £430m from VW last week, continued to believe that it would clinch the deal. In a speech to shareholders, Mr Pischetsrieder said: "We said at

the end of last year that we would make only one offer and we have made only one. Therefore we are surprised by the public debate about whether we would make another."

Shareholders in Vickers, the parent company of Rolls, meet on 4 June to decide between the two bids. The company yesterday issued a circular to shareholders urging them to reject BMW's offer and accept the higher bid from VW.

Mr Pischetsrieder reiterated that BMW would end its contract to supply engines for the Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph and the Bentley Arnage if the business was sold to VW. The terms of the contract require it

to give 12 months notice.

However, the outcome of the bid battle between the two German carmakers may yet rest with the aero-engine maker Rolls-Royce plc which owns the rights to the Rolls-Royce name and trademark.

It has made plain its backing for the bid from BMW, with which it already has an aero-engine joint venture. VW would probably have to pay a substantial licence fee and give Rolls-Royce plc extensive guarantees about how the name would be protected before the aero-engine maker would agree to the transfer of the marque to a foreign buyer.

Vickers was initially engaged in a furious war of words

with Rolls-Royce PLC over what it saw as the aero-engine company's attempts to interfere in the sale process and undermine its ability to maximise returns for Vickers shareholders. But last night the Vickers camp was endeavouring to take the heat out of the row.

"There is no point resurrecting the harney we have last week. Let's just wait for the shareholders to vote on 4 June and then everyone will know where they are," said a spokesman.

One of Vickers' institutional shareholders said yesterday that Rolls-Royce plc was behaving "perfectly properly in seeking to defend the interests of its own shareholders".

Biotech forced to delay meeting

By Andrew Yates

BRITISH BIOTECH was yesterday forced to delay a crucial research and development meeting for analysts because it is busy compiling a circular to shareholders designed to counter damaging allegations against the group by Dr Andrew Miller, its disaffected former director of clinical research.

The announcement came as it emerged that vultures, in the form of rival drugs groups, are circling the group looking to pick off some of its senior staff and products.

Analysts believe large companies such as Zeneca, Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham as well as a host of smaller biotech firms could add to British Biotech's woes by poaching key personnel such as Pam Kirby, a highly re-

spected executive that joined the group from Astra.

Several major drugs companies are also believed to have run a slide rule over British Biotech, attracted by the fact that it has a cash pile equivalent to 30p a share compared to a current share price of just 70.5p. But bidders have been deterred by growing doubts about the efficacy of its treatments, particularly Zucutax, its pancreatic drug. The speed with which the group is using up its spare resources with an expensive development programme has also caused concern.

British Biotech said that its research and development meeting to discuss its pipeline of drugs was now scheduled for June 15.

Analysts raised concerns that the delay was an indication that the group's drug pro-



Dr Keith McCullagh: Preparing circular to answer critics

gramme has been heavily overshadowed by Dr Miller's charges.

British Biotech has faced a stream of allegations from Dr Miller since he was fired from the group last month. It plans to produce a circular answer-

ing these claims as soon as possible. But thus far the group has been reticent to release a publication date. City observers remain sceptical that the circular will be enough to save the job of Keith McCullagh, the group's chief executive.

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CU encounters stormy trading ahead of merger

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

SHARES of Commercial Union and General Accident wobbled uneasily ahead of today's three-month figures, which are likely to be extremely disappointing. CU fell 46p to 1.076p; GenAcc 45p to 1.360p.

The insurers, due to merge to create CGU, have been hit by storms in Canada and the US and fierce competition.

Charterhouse Tilney expect CU to produce profits of £55m, down from £102, and GenAcc £75m, compared with £114m.

Analyst Eamonn Flanagan is keen on the shares and declares: "The merger offers significant potential in terms of cost cutting, management, strategic positioning and quality of earnings".

It is, however, Royal & SunAlliance which is intriguing the stock market. Its cash hogging attitude has prompted speculation it has a big deal in the pipeline. Figures, due next week, are likely to emerge at

£140m against £195m. The shares eased 16.5p to 668.5p. The market had a lacklustre session, with Footsie ending 71.6 points off at 5,956.7. Supporting shares were untroubled with the mid and SmallCap indices stretching to yet new highs. 31, the investment group with a strong small companies involvement, reflected the popularity of supporting shares with a 12p gain to 600p. Its latest market offering is Taylor & Francis, where it has around 15 per cent. The specialist publisher is coming to market with a £130m valuation.

Kingfisher was the best performing blue chip, jumping 48p to 1,095p on hopes its Superdrug chain will benefit from a drugs price war. But Alliance Unichem fell 7.5p to 429.5p.

Courtaulds, as PPG Industries of Pittsburgh emerged as a possible takeover bidder to the Dutch Azko Nobel group, gained 9p to 473p. Northern

Foods, which recently demerged its Express Dairies side, improved 12p to 213.5p as SBC Warburg moved its stance to buy and suggested a 250p target.

Fairley, the electronic equipment group, suffered a 66p fall to 498.5p after a profit warning from chairman Sir Robin Biggam. He said returns from the instrumentation businesses, the group's largest operation, would be "well below" last year's corresponding figures.

Cable & Wireless Communications lost an early gain, ending 9.5p down at 442p as Canada's BCE said it intended to sell its 14.25 per cent interest. Cable and Wireless, up 2p to 679p on persistent speculation about corporate action, may take up some of the unwanted shares.

Engineer Charter continued to attract bullish comments. The price rose 16.5p to 756.5p as Heedersoo Crosthwaite joined Panmure Gordon in ad-

vocating the shares are cheap. Wassall, the conglomerate now parading as more of a venture capitalist, hardened to 330p on talk of US investment roadshows. Rolls-Royce, with US presentations almost on the runway, fell 6.75p to 297.75p as Mercury Asset Management sold 4.9 million shares, cutting its stake to 10.55 per cent.

Somerfield held at 342.5p. BTALex Brown believes benefits from the takeover of Kwik Save could be around £100m. "Strong profit growth and improved visibility of earnings warrant a re-rating," said the investment house, formerly known as NatWest Securities.

Gibbon, the printing ink group, jumped 39.5p to 242.5p as Sun Chemicals produced a 250p-a-share agreed offer. Capital, a security group, gained 27p to 167.5p after a management buyout materialised at 175p a share. Chemical group Brunner Mond, an original constituent of Imperial Chemical Industries which came to market at a cut-price 175p two years ago, gained 7.5p to 186.5p as a 190p share offer was accepted from a company called Soda Ash Investments.

The failure of talks at Lambert Smith Howard, the estate agent, had little impact. After falling 22p, the shares rallied

oo hopes of a hostile strike, ending 2p off at 167.5p. Property Partnership fell 25p to 292.5p as its bid talks were terminated.

Air London, an air charter broker, climbed 17.5p to a 377.5p high with takeover talk intensifying. Celsis International, the struggling drugs group, rose 8.5p to 41p; chief executive Arthur Holden has quit and is talking about mounting a bid (rumoured to be around 60p a share).

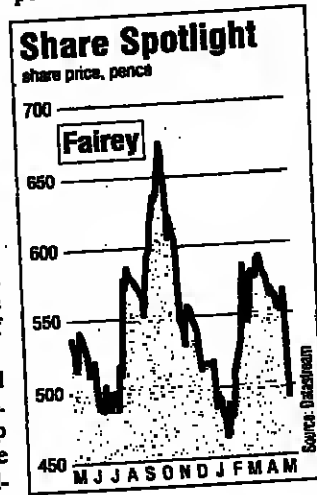
ScS Upholstery hardened 4.5p to 143.5p after Merrill Lynch said buy; Uno, according the same recommendation, was 1p higher at 240p.

Arriva, the transport group, continued to rally after being hit by a downturn trading statement and a persistent, now thought to be cleared, institutional seller. The shares rose 13p to 447.5p. They have been as low as 420p. Before they were unsettled by worries over the group's financial side the shares were riding at above 500p.

ARLEN, the electrical group, firmed to 30p, highest since January, on talk of corporate activity. It may be near to selling unwanted bits and pieces of Plasman, taken over in an £11m deal. The sales could leave Arlen with a £10m cash pile. With a market capitalisation of £20m and an underperforming share price, the electrical group looks vulnerable.

ASK Central, the 35-strong restaurants chain run by the Kaye family, gained 17.5p to 412.5p. It has a £6.4m cash call on its menu with shares offered at 350p. Profits more than doubled to £2m. Two years ago the shares were 56.5p.

SHARES of Allied Leisure, the bowling alley and fast food group, should be 45p against the 30p current price, believe Charterhouse Tilney. The investment house ponders the possibility of a takeover bid. It forecasts profits of £4.4m this year, up from £4.2m.



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506 506 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	506 506 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
507 507 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	507 507 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
508 508 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	508 508 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
509 509 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	509 509 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
510 510 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	510 510 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
511 511 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	511 511 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
512 512 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	512 512 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
513 513 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	513 513 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
514 514 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	514 514 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
515 515 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	515 515 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
516 516 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	516 516 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
517 517 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	517 517 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
518 518 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	518 518 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
519 519 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	519 519 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
520 520 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	520 520 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
521 521 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	521 521 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
522 522 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	522 522 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
523 523 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	523 523 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
524 524 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	524 524 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
525 525 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	525 525 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
526 526 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	526 526 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
527 527 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	527 527 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
528 528 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	528 528 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
529 529 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	529 529 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
530 530 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	530 530 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
531 531 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	531 531 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
532 532 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	532 532 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
533 533 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	533 533 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
534 534 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	534 534 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
535 535 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	535 535 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
536 536 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	536 536 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
537 537 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	537 537 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
538 538 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	538 538 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
539 539 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	539 539 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
540 540 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	540 540 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
541 541 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	541 541 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
542 542 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	542 542 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
543 543 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	543 543 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
544 544 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	544 544 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
545 545 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	545 545 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
546 546 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	546 546 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
547 547 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	547 547 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
548 548 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	548 548 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
549 549 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	549 549 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
550 550 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	550 550 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
551 551 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	551 551 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
552 552 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	552 552 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
553 553 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	553 553 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
554 554 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	554 554 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
555 555 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	555 555 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
556 556 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	556 556 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
557 557 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	557 557 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
558 558 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	558 558 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
559 559 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	559 559 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
560 560 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	560 560 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
561 561 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	561 561 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
562 562 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	562 562 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
563 563 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	563 563 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
564 564 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	564 564 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
565 565 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	565 565 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
566 566 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	566 566 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
567 567 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	567 567 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
568 568 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	568 568 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00
569 569 Alcon	62.00	58.00	41	60.00	+0.20	+1.20	12.00	569 569 Alcon	62.00						

Country	Sterling		Dollar		D-List	
	Spot	1 month	Spot	1 month	3 month	3 month
UK	2.5400	2.5806	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Australia	2.5640	2.5760	1.5804	1.5926	1.5877	1.08708
Canada	2.2641	2.2976	2.0194	2.0447	2.0547	1.08708
France	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Germany	2.3425	2.3372	2.0194	2.0447	2.0547	1.08708
Denmark	1.1049	1.1054	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Finland	1.4740	1.4740	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Italy	8.7892	8.7892	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Japan	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Spain	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Sweden	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Hong Kong	1.0914	1.0914	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
India	1.0914	1.0914	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
South Africa	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Switzerland	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Malaysia	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Philippines	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Singapore	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
New Zealand	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Portugal	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Saudi Arabia	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Taiwan	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
South Africa	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Spain	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148
Switzerland	2.5640	2.5760	1.0718	1.08126	1.0912	0.94148

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16590	10000	Omran	10894	10360
Brazil	12812	10000	Pakistan	72122	44020
Canada	12536	10000	Philippines	63209	38200
Czech Rep	6589	32360	Poland	52222	33776
Egypt	29443	10000	Romania	35420	38200
Ghana	37769	33010	Russia	50026	67610
Hungary	34257	20352	South Korea	64252	33900
Indonesia	32757	33790	Taiwan	94257	33194
Israel	16020	32010	Thailand	63393	38650
Japan	10460	10000	Turkey	29503	40000
Korea	10420	10000	U.S.A.	41054	36730

UK	Germany	US	Japan	
Base 7.25%	Discount	Prime 8.50%	Discount	0.50%
France	Combond 4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium
Intervention 3.30%	Canada	Fed Funds 5.56%	Discount	2.75%
Italy	Prime 8.50%	Spots	Central	3.30%
Discount 5.00%	Discount	10-d Repo 4.25%	Switzerland	
Netherlands	Denmark	Sweden	Discount	1.00%
Refinance 3.90%	Discount	5.00%	Bond(Ave)	3.53%
			Lombard	

Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.85	0.02	4.78	-0.02	4.87	-0.01	5.39	0.00	5.71	-0.01
Belgium	4.85	0.01	4.68	0.00	4.31	0.01	4.68	0.03	5.71	0.04
Canada	4.34	-0.05	5.19	0.01	5.12	-0.03	5.32	-0.03	5.46	-0.02
ECU	4.24	-0.01	4.29	0.00	4.29	0.07	4.74	0.04	5.35	0.03
France	4.85	0.01	4.78	0.02	4.78	0.02	4.87	0.04	5.39	0.04
Germany	3.64	-0.01	3.95	0.00	4.15	0.03	4.67	0.03	5.04	0.05
Italy	5.20	0.02	4.82	0.00	4.98	0.05	4.93	0.03	5.26	0.03
Japan	3.38	0.00	0.98	0.00	0.41	-0.01	1.90	-0.03	1.57	-0.03
Netherlands	4.85	0.01	4.57	0.00	4.13	0.02	4.64	0.03	4.99	0.03
Spain	3.65	0.00	4.30	0.01	4.37	0.05	4.34	0.06	5.21	0.04
Sweden	4.87	0.00	4.80	0.02	4.88	0.02	5.02	0.05	5.32	0.04
Switzerland	4.14	0.01	1.93	0.07	2.00	0.01	2.00	0.01	2.00	0.01
UK	4.85	0.01	4.85	0.01	4.85	0.02	5.15	0.01	5.69	0.02
US	4.99	0.01	5.17	-0.01	5.63	-0.02	5.69	-0.02	5.75	-0.01

	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Treasury Bills						
LIBOR						
Domestic Depos	6.00	6.50	7.25	7.25	7.34	7.41
Exporting Depo	7.25	7.38	7.51	7.38	7.34	7.41
Eighty Bank Sale			7.21	7.34	7.21	7.34
Sterling CDs			7.38	7.34	7.37	7.30
Eurodollar CDs			5.95	5.81		

Liffe Financial Futures		436	428	416	428	436	428
Contract	Settlement	High	Low	East foot volume	Open	Inter	
Long City	Jun-88	10834	10828	10814	578800	2182300	
Short City	Jun-88	10829	10826	10809	106500	206500	
German Bund	Jun-88	10950	10970	10930	163000	1856500	
Italian Bond	Jun-88	18256	18252	18208	143800	1226000	
Japan Govt Bd	Jun-88	82289	82273	82058	135000	800	
3 Mth Sterling	Jun-88	86256	86256	86256	135000	839300	
	Sep-88	86259	86271	86287	140500	1373400	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-88	92300	90331	89228	2572200	4009600	
	Sep-88	90216	89256	88256	135000	393300	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-88	85225	85229	8524	125200	2544100	
	Sep-88	85273	85277	85275	2542200	2827700	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-88	86483	86483	86483	140000	593000	
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-88	86182	86182	86182	2203500	4688500	
3 Mth Euro	Jun-88	86275	86275	86275	14000	1280300	
	Sep-88	86279	86279	86279	14000	736800	
FTSE 100	Jun-88	598000	602800	597200	57400	5652200	

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Commodity Indices			Goldman Sachs		30-Sep	
	Base date	Last	Chg	%chg	31 Dec	%chg YTD
Index	1970=100	169.97	0.25	0.15	216.26	-23.83
Agricultural	1970=100	206.72	-0.14	-0.07	231.23	-11.03
Energy	1965=100	242.24	0.82	0.30	65.96	32.17
Ind Metals	1970=100	159.34	0.02	0.01	152.79	-4.42
Livestock	1970=100	110.58	0.03	0.05	119.03	-5.67
Prec Metals	1970=100	400.93	-2.24	-0.56	463.54	-3.47

Energy										* prices at 5:30pm	
Brent Crude (\$/barrel)			Gas oil (\$/tonne)			WTI Crude (\$/barrel)			Products (\$/tonne)		
IFPE	Clos	Chg	Vol	IFPE	Clos	Chg	Vol	NYM	Last	Chg	Spot CIF NW Eur
Jun	14.98	0.04	39391	Jun	133.75	0.00	9797	Jun	15.89	0.03	Duesenro 65 192.50
Jul	14.90	0.01	21768	Jul	134.50	-0.75	13737	Jul	15.90	0.01	Negitima 186.50
Aug	15.02	0.05	5077	Jul	135.75	0.25	2748	Aug	16.30	0.03	Gasoil 105.50
								Sep	16.63	0.07	Fuel Oil (35%/4) 64.00

LME (\$/tonne)	Cash	Chg	3 month	Chg	LME stocks	Chg
Aluminium Hg	1365.5	1366.5	8.50	1392	1393	9
Aluminium Al	1237	1272	900	1265	1288	8
Copper A	1722.5	1728.5	250	1738	1737	8
Nickel	6885	5335	300	546	546.5	2.5
Lead	4980	4980	-145.00	5070	5075	-143
Tin	5180	5770	000	5695	5700	-5
Zinc	1006	1007	-600	1032	1033	-9

Precious Metals									
pm tbs/\$ per oz			pm tbs/\$ per oz			Coins (\$)			
	Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Year's chg	
Platinum	36600	-720	-3.00	Platinum	23785	-410	-4.80	Kruggerands	30145-37225
Palladium	33300	2200	103.75	Palladium	20400	730	90.25	Sovereigns	7001
Silver	579	000	0.93	Silver	355	001	0.98	Nobles	37905
Gold	29235	045	-46.85					Maple Leaf	31196-4104

Agricultural										* at 12:00pm
Cocon		Coffee		Barley		Potatoes		Lge Potatoes		
LFPE	0/0me	LFPE	0/0me	LFPE	0/0me	LFPE	0/0me	LFPE	0/0me	
May8	12500	May8	20500	May8	7650	May8	3000	May8	8500	
June	14000	June	24000	June	7250	June	3400	June	9425	
Sept	19400	Sept	27000	Sept	7725	Sept	7700	Sept	6100	
Vol	0	Vol	0	Vol	0	Vol	0	Vol	0	
White Sugar*		Freight		Wheat		Corn*		Soy Beans*		
LFPE	0/0me	LFPE	0/00/0	LFPE	0/0me	CBOT Cash/Jan		CBOT 5%k/bk		
Aug/8	28750	May8	94000	May8	7675	May8	23850	May8	900	
Aug/8	29840	June	95000	June	8000	May8	24525	June	2980	
Dec/8	27000	Aug	88000	Aug	79000	June	24500	Aug	2980	
Vol	0	Vol	0	Vol	0	Vol	0	Vol	0	

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Woodward's rookies promised a 'Pommie thrashing'

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

ENGLAND and Australia were at sporting loggerheads while WG Grace's chin was still a brittle-free zone, but seldom can there have been so toxic an outpouring of competitive bile as that which flooded the Twickenham headquarters of the Rugby Football Union yesterday. According to Dick McGruther, one of the Wallabies' most prominent officials and a graduate of the Les Patterson school of diplomacy, England's 37-man squad for this summer's four-Test tour of the southern hemisphere amounts to the "greatest sell-out since Gallipoli".

The chairman of the Australian Rugby Union did not stop there. "I think the RFU have treated the southern hemi-

sphere with a degree of contempt, but we invite all Australians to come out and witness a Pommie thrashing," he spluttered, eager to cement a reputation as the greatest Aussie orator since Merv Hughes. "You really have to wonder whether this mob is capable of hosting a World Cup pool, or why they should be rewarded with one."

McGruther, whose status as an executive member of the International Rugby Board makes him one of the most influential political figures in the union game, hurled his toys clean out of his pram in response to England's decision to send no fewer than 17 uncapped players across the equator later this month. If a critical outburst was entirely predictable from so outspoken a character - McGruther took it upon himself to stoke the flames of discord

throughout the recent domestic peace talks between the RFU and its leading professional clubs - the level of vitriol was startling, to say the least. Should England actually win in Brisbane on 6 June, they will expect their accuser to issue a public apology from the top of Twickenham's West Stand.

Clive Woodward, the England coach, saw the verbal barrage coming. "I understand the southern hemisphere's point of view and I don't feel great about leaving senior players at home, especially as all three of our tour opponents brought strong squads to Britain before Christmas," he admitted. "But I can put my hand on my heart and say that with the possible exception of Kyras Bracken, none of those players would make the Test side on current form. If we were playing this

weekend, guys like Lawrence Dallaglio and Martin Johnson wouldn't be on the field."

Dallaglio, Johnson, Bracken, Jason Leonard, Jeremy Guscott and Tony Underwood are the most controversial absentees; Guscott insisted after last year's Lions triumph that he would never tour again while the other four are carrying injuries requiring

rest, recuperation and, in some cases, surgery. "You only had to see Lawrence playing in last Saturday's cup final to realise that he is a shadow of himself," Woodward said. "These players may be turning out for their clubs - something I'm far from happy about, I might say - but the fact remains that they're unfit and out of form. I don't want to

insult other countries by fielding injured players, however big the names involved."

Phil de Glanville and Paul Grayson are, as expected, excused for pressing family reasons, while the absence of four more Test regulars - Richard Hill, Tim Rodber, Mike Catt and David Rees - with long-term injuries means that only nine of the 22 English Lions who turned over South Africa under Fran Cotton and Ian McGeechan will travel south this time. Indeed, it is almost possible to select a full Lions side of non-touring Englishmen: proof positive that if a week is a long time in politics, a year is virtually interminable in modern-day rugby.

Matthew Dawson, the Northampton scrum-half, leads the party in Dallaglio's absence. Woodward could hard-

ly have made a more ironic choice; just six weeks ago, Dawson was one of the "Franklin's Gardens Three" at the centre of an unholy rumpus over player contracts, sparked by the initial refusal of Keith Barwell, the Saints' owner, to release his employees for the trek. "It's a complete surprise," he said. "I had no idea I was in contention."

Dawson is likely to face the Wallabies with an unfamiliar back division including Jonny Wilkinson, the boy wonder from Newcastle, at outside-half. Tim Stimpson and Nick Beal, two of last year's midweek Lions who for one reason or another have barely played since, will push hard at full-back and right wing respectively while Steve Raven-

croft, the Saracens centre, has every chance of a cap in midfield.

By the time the party reaches New Zealand for the main

business of the seven-match programme, Ben Sturham may have cemented his place in a back row certain to feature Tony Diprose and Neil Back. The 18st blind-side flanker needs to fend off what is certain to be a stern challenge from the recalled Ben Clarke, but Woodward sees him as a newcomer with World Cup potential.

The most experimental areas of selection are at wing, where the uncapped Sale pairing of Tom Beim and Matt Moore will do battle with the uncapped Richmond duo of Spencer Brown and Dominic Chapman, and at prop. Woodward is seriously concerned about the front row situation and with good reason; as the two rookies, Duncan Bell and Darren Crompton, will quickly discover, a "blooding" in New Zealand tends to involve real blood.

England's 37-strong tour party

(for Australia, New Zealand and South Africa; leaving 27 May)

BACKS: I Simpson (Newcastle), M Perry (Bath), A Huxley (Leicester), M Moore (Sale), W Beal (Northampton), T Beal (Sale), S Brown (Richmond), D Chapman (Richmond), S Ravenscroft (Saracens), S Potter (Leicester), J Wilkinson (Newcastle), J Baxendale (Sale), W Greenwood (Leicester), A King (Wasps), J Lawes (Bristol), M Dawson (Northampton), S Benton (Gloucester), P Richards (London Irish). **FORWARDS:** D Crompton (Richmond), W Green (Wasps), D Bell (Sale), P Vickery (Gloucester), G Rowntree (Leicester), G Gutter (Saracens), P Greening (Gloucester), R Cockerill (Leicester), G Archer (Newcastle), R Fidler (Gloucester), D Greenwood (Saracens), S Shaw (Wasps), B Sturham (Saracens), L Moody (Leicester), S Ojomoh (Gloucester), B Clarke (Richmond), P Sanderson (Sale), A Diprose (Saracens), N Back (Leicester).

O'Sullivan's mix of talent and turmoil

Alleged drug abuse is the latest blot on the reputation of one of snooker's most colourful players. Guy Hodgson on a volatile career

RONNIE O'SULLIVAN was frank. He always is. Delve into a history that most would prefer to remain hidden and he exposes it with an almost evangelical zeal. "I was a prat," he said, referring to the time he hit a press officer. "Totally out of order. I was like a time bomb waiting to go off."

A time bomb, no metaphor sums up O'Sullivan better. He either explodes into effortless brilliance on a snooker table, or is so careless you want to shake responsibility into him. His character, too, is a combustible mix, either delightful or, on occasions, boorish. You can almost hear the ticking.

Today another potential blot is poised to land on an already besmirched reputation. O'Sullivan is alleged to have failed a preliminary drugs test, something that will be established only if the B sample also shows traces of cannabis. A fine and a possible suspension await the 22-year-old if the allegations are proved true.

It is the latest of a lengthening line of incidents that has dogged a career that has lurched from brilliance to controversy. Cannabis is not a performance-enhancing drug, but its use is against the law of the land and is outlawed by the World Professional Billiard and Snooker Association. To use it is to run the risk of detection in random tests. To be, in O'Sullivan's words, a prat.

This is not unfamiliar territory for O'Sullivan. His first brush with authority was laughably childish, being reprimanded for throwing a bread roll which hit an official at a junior event. He was 11 then and even when he turned professional five years later the "crimes" were petty assertions of rebelliousness: inappropriate scruffiness at an official reception in Malta, being reported to the WPBSA for urinating on a wall and using profane language in Plymouth.

Away from the table, however, the signs of inner turmoil were more alarming. He smashed a neon light demonstrating his driving skills in a car park and he was banned for speeding at 133mph on the M3 in February 1995.

All irresponsible, stupid even, but causing no harm to others. It was only when he arrived at The Crucible for the Embassy World Championship two years ago that the hurt spread. He was unforgivably disrespectful to a fellow professional, Alain Robidoux, when he began playing with his wrong hand in the first round, saying: "I can play better left-handed than he can right."

Typically, he was later filled with remorse. "It wasn't me saying those things," he said and he probably felt it was not the real Ronnie either who attacked press officer Michael Ganley over what was a trivial argument of who should be in

'I am easily led, but if I do go out for a beer with my friends at least I'm in good condition to recover now'

the press room. For that he was fined £20,000 and given a two-year suspended ban.

If that paints a picture of a prat then personal experience would argue otherwise. Six years ago, I remember his running breathless into Ilford Snooker Centre to make a contribution to an article about the sport even though he had earlier said he could not make the appointment. Most sportsmen can barely be bothered to answer the telephone, never mind put themselves out for journalists.

Even last month he was happy to disrupt his practice at the British Open. "Sure, mate. Want to do it now?" Then he disarmingly revealed that it was his mother who had dragged some sense into him after the Michael Ganley incident. "She threw me out of the house," he said in mock indignation.

"She wasn't happy with my attitude. I became lazy and fat and couldn't be bothered to do anything. She did it because she

knew I couldn't hack it. I was back in two weeks and told her there would be a new me. She told me: 'Don't just say it, do it.'"

People who know him better say the impression you get depends on O'Sullivan's mood. Sometimes he can be sullen and difficult, but there are mitigating reasons. The family ties pull strongly within him, which makes his dislocated adolescence more of a personal tragedy.

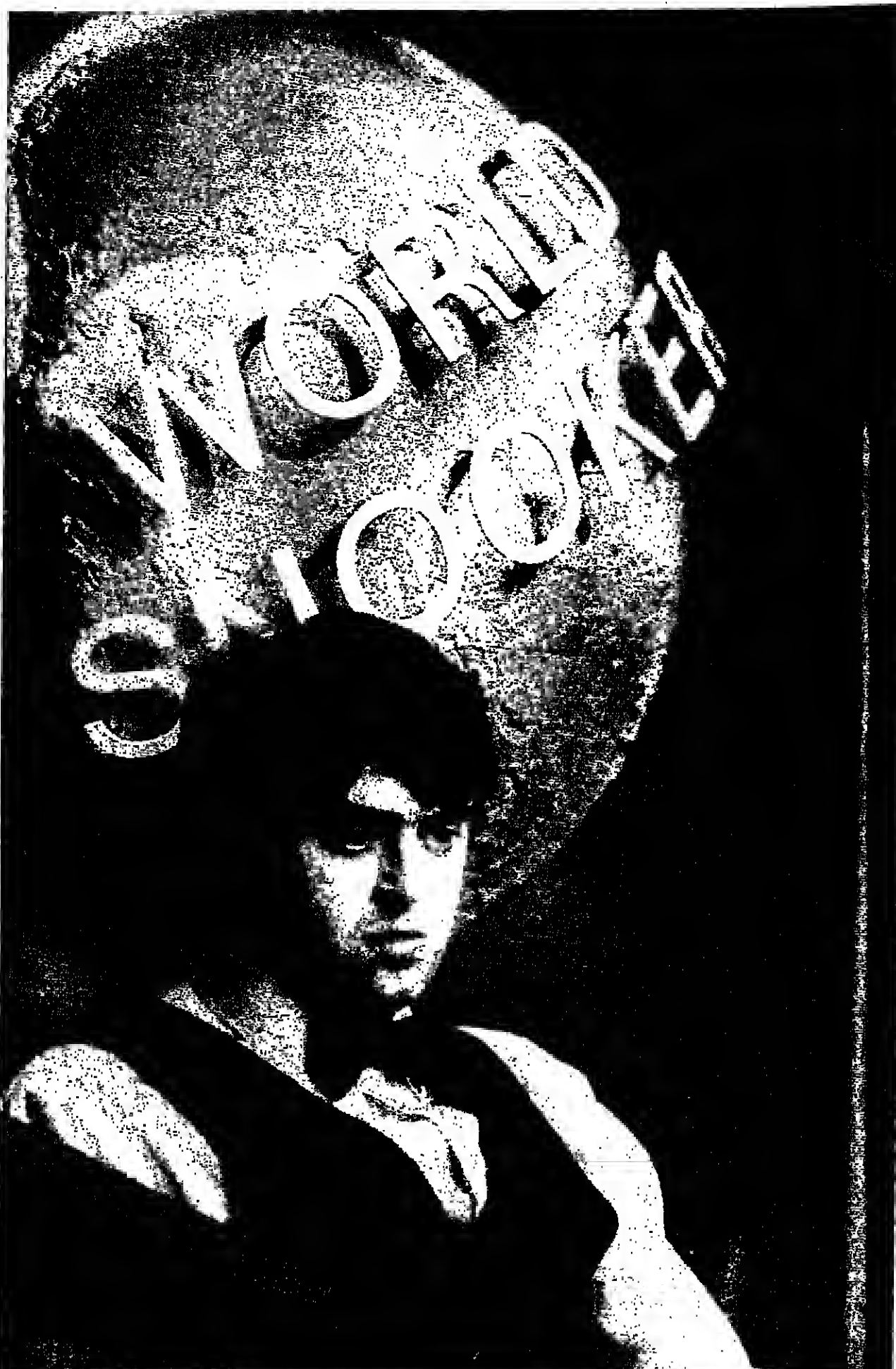
It was his father, also christened Ronald, who was the biggest influence on the young O'Sullivan, buying him his first snooker table at eight and taking him to the local Essex club where, initially, he was given a 30-point start. Within six months the prodigy was giving adults points and thoroughly thrashing them.

He was a talented footballer, too. At 13 he was offered a trial with Tottenham Hotspur, but declined to concentrate on a sport where he was rapidly becoming a phenomenon. At 10 he made his first century break; at 12 he won his first pro-am; at 15 years 97 days he became the youngest player to compile a 147-break in competition; at 16 he won 74 of his first 76 professional matches in the Blackpool qualifying school.

It was at Blackpool, just as his career was taking off, that the seeds of his problems were sown. His father, regarded in snooker circles as a rough diamond with a generous spirit and wallet, was the one person who could always keep young Ronnie in line and on the day following his qualification for the World Championship, O'Sullivan was given a life sentence for murder.

Suddenly, the main prop in the youngster's life had been removed and it was with some wonder that everyone watched him progress, seemingly untouched, winning his first ranking tournament, the UK Championship, in 1993. Inside, however, the doubts, the tension, the pressure borne of overwhelming expectation, were swirling malevolently.

When his mother, Maria, who had taken over the family's pornography business, was also jailed for seven months for



Ronnie O'Sullivan: Reputation for being brilliant and controversial in equal measure

Photograph: Emics

tax irregularities, and, as the relative of a celebrity, received intimidatory treatment from the inmates of Holloway, something snapped. His behaviour plummeted as "incidents" escalated. Potting balls seemed unimportant and he talked of giving up the game, an astonishing sentiment for someone still in his teens.

It was only when his mother was released and evicted him from the family home that he came away from the

abyss, losing three stones and undergoing a strenuous fitness regime. "I am easily led," he said, "but if I do go out for a beer with my friends at least I'm in good condition to recover now."

The evidence was strong. O'Sullivan won four titles last season and rose from seventh to third in the world rankings. A typically fitful appearance in the World Championship semi-finals a fortnight ago where he lost to the eventual winner,

John Higgins, also suggested that he was moving down the path towards the full flowering of his talent. Erratically, but moving none the less.

Now that progress is threatened by these latest allegations. If proved true, the least O'Sullivan can expect is a hefty fine and the docking of ranking points although the WPBSA, given his past record, will also have to consider a suspension. Yet again, O'Sullivan is in need of guidance, either

from his manager, Ian Doyle, or from his parents.

"I still keep in touch with my father," O'Sullivan said recently, "he can still find ways to give me a kick up the backside over the phone."

No matter whether the allegations are true, you can guarantee contact will have been made this week between Leicester Prison and the player's home in Essex.

It is to be hoped frank words were exchanged there, too.

Eriksson and Nicol pull out of tour

SCOTLAND'S tour to Fiji and Australia suffered more setbacks yesterday when the London Scottish centre, Ronnie Eriksson, and Bath's captain, Andy Nicol, were forced to withdraw from the 35-man squad.

Nicol became the ninth player to make his apologies after suffering a torn hamstring while playing for his club against Newcastle last night. Hours earlier, Eriksson had become the eighth because of ligament damage to a finger which requires surgery. However, he will continue to play for his club in their two-leg play-off against Bristol as the Exiles try to secure promotion to England's top flight. His tour place goes to Jamie Mayer, Watsonians' dynamic young centre.

Eriksson's withdrawal leaves an even greater hole in terms of experience, with Ian Jardine the only recognised centre in the squad with more than one cap to his name. With Alan Tait, Gary Armstrong, Doddie Weir and Tony Stanger making themselves unavailable, and Peter Walton, George Graham and Craig Chalmers injured, the loss of Nicol is another major blow.

The Kelso captain, Adam Roxburgh, and the Heriot's FP's full-back, Hugh Gilmour, have been instructed not to play in their clubs' Tameams Premiership play-off decider on Saturday to avoid jeopardising their places on the eight-match tour, with the squad scheduled to leave on Monday.

The South African Rugby Football Union accepted the resignation of its president, Louis Luyt, yesterday and resolved to apologise to President Nelson Mandela for dragging him into court in March. Saru plans to meet the black-led National Sports Council today to seek a reversal of the NSC's call for an international boycott of the Springboks.

TODAY'S NUMBER

1,000

The number of square metres of turf which will be rooted in the Manchester United museum when the Old Trafford pitch is dug up this summer. Two-thirds of the pitch is being given away in one metre squares to fans on a first-come first-served basis, while the remaining 1,000m will be auctioned off for charity.

New plea to lift TV controls

Cricket

By Myles Hodgson

LORD's officials yesterday reinforced their warning that cricket's future as England's premier summer sport is under threat if the Government refuses to take home Test matches off the list of protected broadcast events.

All England's home Tests are on a list including the Wimbledon tennis finals, the FA Cup final, the Derby, the Grand National and the Olympics, for which live coverage outside most available on terrestrial television.

At the launch of the England and Wales Cricket Board's first cricket report at Edgbaston yesterday, the chairman, Lord MacLaurin, and the chief executive, Tim Lamb, again warned about the difficult future cricket may face unless they have the opportunity to negotiate in an open market place.

The ECB, which showed an annual revenue of £65m in the report, says that implementing its national development plan to improve facilities, coaching and opportunities within the sport would cost about £300m.

It argues that about 40 per

cent of cricket's income is from television revenue and unless it has an opportunity to increase that income, cricket could suffer in competition with other summer sports like rugby league, tennis and athletics.

The topic is being assessed by an advisory committee, who have recommended that cricket is removed from the list, before the Heritage Secretary, Chris Smith, gives his final decision later this month.

The ECB's joint deal with the BBC and Sky for home Test matches, was worth about £60m over the past four years.

Action on fighters' weights

Boxing

BRITISH boxing is to go weight-watching in the latest attempt to further improve its already strict medical standards. Following Spencer Oliver's ill-fated contest against Sergei Devakov, the Board of Control now intends to send officials into gymnasiums on a regular basis to monitor the poundage of all fighters.

Oliver's camp insist that the blood clot sustained by Barnet's defending champion in the European super-bantamweight title fight at the Royal Albert Hall

10 days ago could not be attributed to the demands of weight-making.

But the Board secretary, John Morris, still believes it is time to act and make certain that fighters are not short-cutting their battle with the scales, thus increasing the dangers of dehydration and with it a greater risk of brain injury.

When the Board's medical systems were overhauled after the death of Bradley Stone, the monitoring of boxers' weights was to be carried out on a random basis. The operation will now become a more concentrated one.

Kulukundis funds French trip

Athletics

By Mike Rowbottom

UNLESS you happen to be a Daley Thompson or a Denise Lewis, being a multi-event athlete is a thankless occupation. Along with pole vaulters and shot putters, decathletes and heptathletes have always been right down the pecking order in terms of resources and prestige.

But more than 50 of Britain's second-class athletic citizens are currently preparing for the trip of a lifetime. And it won't cost them a penny.

The weekend after next, a noted patron of the sport, the Greek shipping magnate Sir Eddie Kulukundis, has decided to put on a little bash for them all. He has hired the Fournier stadium at Arles in the south of France for a two-day meet which will offer a warm-weather venue for competitors who would otherwise be thinking in terms of fixtures at Stoke, Hexham or Chester-le-Street.

Like marathon runners, multi-eventers can expect to produce only a couple of decent performances in a year and this unexpected windfall will provide

ideal preparation for the forthcoming European Cup.

Among those who will take advantage of the trip - for which all travel and accommodation expenses will be paid - are Nick Buckfield, Janine Whitlock and Du'Aine Ladejo, who is due to compete in his first decathlon.

Kulukundis, a former theatrical impresario married to the actress Susan Hampshire, accepts that this project is "more quixotic, more exotic" than any he has ever attempted. And the cost? "Well, over 20," he said. Yes, we were talking thousands.

Healed Anderton set to win World Cup place

Football

By Glenn Moore

THE gnarled old veteran who always made the most of his talent bit the dust. The lazy genius, who may now never fulfil his, went too. So did a clutch of international innocents, a novice and a former golden boy.

So read the casualty list as Glenn Hoddle began culling his World Cup hopefuls yesterday. The dreamers are down to 30, leaving another eight to be axed before Hoddle names his final 22 in 20 days' time.

The seven who can now start planning their summer holidays are Stuart Pearce, rejected after 76 caps, Matt Le Tissier, discarded despite a bat-

trick for the B team last month; the uncapped trio of Ray Parlour, Dominic Matteo and Kevin Pressman; Andy Cole; and Nick Barmby, the man who scored England's first goal under Hoddle.

"Sicknote", however, did make it. Indeed, to judge from Hoddle's enthusiastic comments about him, Darren Anderton, who has visited Eileen Drewery, Hoddle's faith healer, meeter during his three years of injury problems, is likely to make the final cut as well. "Darren's a talented player," said Hoddle. "He plays with his head up, plays first-time football. In international football you've got to have vision and this lad has."

Hoddle then implicitly crit-

cised Terry Venables for playing Anderton in Euro '96 when, Hoddle said, "he needed to have rested. He was overloaded in the amount of games he had, although that was Terry's decision."

"I wanted to give him the best possible chance to get fit and I'm pleased he has. He's going to get better and better and we've got some football still up our sleeve to allow him to do that. He's having to play with himself a bit at the moment but that will stop when he gets used to a match tempo and his confidence back. Hopefully, his best form will come in the coming weeks."

Anderton, Ian Wright, Les Ferdinand, Jamie Redknapp and Paul Gascoigne will all have to prove their fitness in

England's 30-man squad

For Italy against Sheffield Wednesday on 23 May and against Russia in the final on 27 May and Belgium on 29 May in the semi-finals.

Seaman (Arsenal)	Le Saux (Chelsea)	Schuster (Man Utd)
Walker (Spurs)	Hinchcliffe (Sheff W)	Anderton (Tottenham)
Martin (Leeds)	R Ferdinand (W Ham)	Merson (M'boro)
Flowers (Blackburn)	Beckham (Man Utd)	Stiles (Blackburn)
G Neville (Man Utd)	Lea (Liverpool)	Shearer (Newcastle)
Southgate (A Villa)	Gascoigne (M'boro)	Owen (Liverpool)
Adams (Arsenal)	Batty (Newcastle)	Duffy (Coventry)
Keown (Arsenal)	Butt (Man Utd)	Wright (Aston Villa)
Campbell (Spurs)	Redknapp (Liverpool)	L Ferdinand (Spurs)

England's final warm-ups, the home friendly with Saudi Arabia on 23 May and the Casablanca double-header against Morocco and Belgium four and six days later.

The most surprising omission is that of Le Tissier, a Hoddle favourite who looked to have played himself back into contention against Russia B. His

subsequent failure even to be considered in the 30 would appear to justify Chris Sutton's refusal to play in a B match, but Hoddle countered that by pointing to Paul Merson's promotion after such a game.

He then said of Le Tissier: "He was very close but he has not quite done enough. I saw him [against Spurs] on Sunday

and he did some wonderful things. Then, around about the 60-minute mark, it didn't happen for him. He has to improve on a lot of things that will make him last 90 minutes, to produce what he can. That's something Darren has over him."

Thus did Hoddle, a man whose own international career was blighted by the continual criticism of his work-rate, consign Le Tissier's international career to history after just eight appearances, only one of which lasted 90 minutes. At 29 Le Tissier is unlikely either to make the next World Cup or change his game and lifestyle.

Hoddle's criticism does not quite square with Le Tissier scoring twice and hitting the post against an admittedly weak Rus-

sia B side in the last five minutes, nor the number of late goals he scores for Southampton. However, he has also been regularly substituted by his club this season and, Hoddle said, he lacks Anderton's ability to play in a variety of positions as well as his natural fitness. Since the same criticisms could also be made of Gascoigne, Hoddle clearly decided there was room for only one enigma in the party.

Anderton's re-emergence also spelt the end for Parlour who, like Matteo and Cole, was hindered by missing planned appearances through injury. Cole, who scored 25 goals this season, said: "I don't know what more I could have done. I'd be lying if I didn't say that my form over the course

of the season didn't warrant an inclusion but that is not my decision."

Pressman's omission was expected once other goalkeepers regained fitness while Barmby's late return to form came too late. Pearce, with Gascoigne the only current England player with World Cup experience, had read the runes.

"When I was left out in February he told me he was worried about my injury situation," Pearce said. "I knew then that he'd given up on me. I was in the last squad, but basically anyone who was fit and could possibly be available was to be left out of this one. I'm extremely disappointed but I was expecting it."

Chelsea's mission, page 79

Shearer sails clear of FA sanction

By Mark Burton

ALAN SHEARER breathed a sigh of relief yesterday after a Football Association commission found him not guilty of deliberately kicking Leicester City's Neil Lennon in the face.

A case that became curiously complex reached a predictable conclusion after influential figures, including the alleged victim himself and the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, Gordon Taylor, formed a queue to give evidence on the England captain's behalf. Even Gary Lineker, football's original Mr Clean and a Leicester City supporter, offered to speak for his successor as England's most effective striker.

A three-man commission decided after the personal hearing that the player himself requested that the incident was provoked by a "genuine attempt to free himself" by Shearer.

In a statement, the FA said: "Gordon Taylor represented Alan Shearer and Neil Lennon was called as a witness in his defence. Statements were also heard from referee Martin Bodenham and assistant referee Alan Kaye. The three-man FA commission of Geoff Thompson, FA vice-chair, Barry Bright and Ian Stott heard the case and found it not proven."

"In reaching its decision the

commission accepted that the incident was initially caused by Neil Lennon pulling at the shirt of Alan Shearer turning round and trapping his leg. The commission further accepted that the alleged incident of Alan Shearer swinging out with his left leg was a genuine attempt to free himself."

Shearer, who had proclaimed his innocence all along, was delighted to have cleared his name and looked forward to Saturday's Cup final for Newcastle against Arsenal and the countdown to the World Cup, which starts next Monday.

"I would like to thank the PFA for representing me and Neil Lennon for giving evidence on my behalf," he said after the case. "I spoke to Gordon Taylor about this matter for the first time after last Sunday's game at Blackburn and was convinced that with his sense of integrity and fairness, he was the right man to put my case."

"I am pleased to put the record straight and in doing so clear my name. I was always confident that I would."

Such confidence was not universal in the immediate aftermath of the incident during Newcastle's Premiership match against Leicester at Filbert Street on 29 April.

First, the replaying of video footage of the incident on television generated mixed opinions over whether there was any in-

tent on Shearer's part when his boot hit Lennon's face; then, other players began to relate what they claimed were examples of the England centre-forward straying beyond acceptable levels of physical contact during their teams' matches against Newcastle.

Shearer has such a high, clean-cut reputation, underlined by two Newcastle directors allegedly referring to him as "Mary Poppins", that there was talk of a witch-hunt to undermine him, and the case was seen by some merely as a question of whether the FA would dare to act against an England captain. To them, consideration of the evidence hardly seemed to matter.

However, a guilty verdict looked unlikely once Glenn Hoddle had expressed strong support for Shearer and the England coach also made a plea for the case to be settled before his captain became involved in final preparations for the World Cup finals in France.

Lennon disagreed with the FA's decision to bring a case against Shearer and Leicester City also wanted the matter to be dropped. Lennon also thought the match referee should have taken action against Shearer at the time. Had Bodenham chosen even to speak to Lennon and Shearer after they had tangled, the protracted FA case would probably not have taken place.



In the clear: Alan Shearer (left) prepares for Saturday's FA Cup final with his Newcastle team-mate Philippe Albert at Maiden Castle on the day he was found not guilty of deliberately kicking Leicester's Neil Lennon. Photograph: Allsport

Batistuta attracts United's interest

MANCHESTER UNITED are reported to be interested in signing the Argentinean striker Gabriel Batistuta. "Batigol" has spent the last seven years with Fiorentina and his agent said yesterday: "Gabriel now wants to leave and nobody will make him change his mind. There are a lot of people interested, like Roma, Parma, Real Madrid and Manchester United."

Burnley player-manager Chris Waddle has parted company with the Second Division club by "mutual consent". Oldham have appointed Andy Ritchie as their new manager, while Keith Stevens is to take up the reins at Millwall after 16 years with the club as a player.

Next Wednesday's European Cup final between Juventus and Real Madrid could be moved from Amsterdam because legal limits on noise will prevent extra flights arriving and leaving from the city's airport.

The Dutch ministry of transport said yesterday it could not change the law to allow the additional flights. The Juventus team flight and around 160 charter flights for supporters have also been refused permission to land.

England's World Cup group rivals Colombia may have to travel to France without Carlos Valderrama. He owes the French authorities nearly £20,000 in unpaid tax dating from his two seasons with Montpellier in the 1990s.

Newcastle find form

By Simon Turnbull

KENNY DALGLISH was on form yesterday. So was Sir John Hall. At Newcastle United's FA Cup final open day, the contrast between manager and chairman was predictably black and white.

Up in the St James' Suite at St James' Park, across the corridor from the trophy cabinet that time has forgotten, Dalglish was playing it tight. In the absence of any clues to his likely Wembley line-up, someone asked if he would be naming his team early. "Maybe half a one," came the reply.

What, then, did he think of facing the country's form team in the final? "We're the form team," Dalglish said. "Arsenal have lost their last two games; we've won one and lost one."

The mask of inscrutability gave way to a smirk or two, although the Newcastle manager was not amused when someone asked if he was happy with his life in the North-east. "I don't see the relevance of that question," Dalglish said, searching for a hidden meaning.

At that stage of the afternoon, the big story was looking like "Dalglish sees no relevance in being happy," which might have struck a chord with the fanzine writer in attendance. His report of Newcastle's recent match against Wimbledon read: "ZZZZZZZZ. Half-time 0-0. ZZZZZZZZ. Full-time 0-0."

We were woken from our collective St James' Suite slumber when the bold Sir John arrived, minus a charger but suitably charged with Wembley fever.

"The bookies have made Arsenal favourites," he said, "but never ever underestimate this club. We've got our history and tradition in the FA Cup and we're fighters."

In the past two months, of course, they have had to be fighters. Sir John was obliged to interrupt his retirement to repair the damage done by the Gallowgate tapes recorded by the *News of the World*. He agreed to replace Freddie Shepherd as chairman of Newcastle United, the football club, until the end of the season, but may be willing to extend his return

—should Newcastle United, the plc, request him to do so.

Asked whether he would be willing to stay on, Sir John replied: "I don't know yet. Maybe. I would prefer not to be in charge. I never wanted to come back. But there was a void in the club that had to be filled. The club needed a period of stability. I think it still does need a bit more."

"It's the business part we've got to look at. I think the football side is coming right. Kenny will get it right, as he always has done."

If Sir John gets it right on Saturday, one notable sporting double will have been dashed. Another, though, would still be possible. Newcastle Falcons will win rugby union's Allied Dunbar Premiership on Sunday if they beat Harlequins at The Stoop. Sir John, the Falcons' chairman, will be there.

But if his Magpies plunder some silverware on Saturday, however, he might miss the FA Cup parade planned for Sunday night. All flights from Heathrow to Newcastle are fully booked.

Silence over O'Sullivan drug allegations

By Guy Hodgson

RONNIE O'SULLIVAN was at the centre of another impending controversy last night when it was alleged he had failed a drugs test. The silence, in true diplomatic fashion, was deafening.

Neither his manager, Ian Doyle, nor the governing body, the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, would comment on reports alleging the

22-year-old UK champion had tested positive for cannabis during an invitation event in Ireland in March which he won. Instead O'Sullivan must wait until a second sample is tested by Sports Council officials today in London.

Doyle referred the matter to his Glasgow-based solicitor, Jerry Sinclair. "There is a set procedure which has to be followed by WPBSA," Sinclair said. "Part of that procedure involves a second test."

O'Sullivan faces at least a

four-figure fine if he proves positive and he is later disciplined by the governing body.

There is also the question of previous misdemeanours, the most serious of which was an assault on a press officer during the 1996 World Championships in Sheffield. He was fined £20,000 and had a two-year ban suspended for two years and, even though the allegation this time is of a different nature, it falls within that period.

Snooker's troubled talent, page 28

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3609, Wednesday 13 May

By Aquila

Yesterday's Solution

ACROSS

1 Notes on chart-busting internal airway (7)

5 Pipe in the inner ear (7)

9 Feeble shovellers, for example, bankrupts? (4-5)

10 Pansy member of the string section (5)

11 School report taken in (5)

12 Piece of battery chicken? (9)

14 Gift ideal for the tense (7-7)

17 Most senior sailor is held, falsely, to be well settled (3-11)

21 Pieces laid out for ten diners in mess? (6-5)

23 Damage from parking in ground (5)

24 Minister to decipher runes (5)

25 One allowed to turn up volume in a quiet workplace (9)

26 To carouse, I am placed in duty-list (7)

27 Arrangement of garden-ent extension (7)

DOWN

1 Does he issue bank statements? (6)

2 Currently, one gives readings (7)

3 Pleasure-seekers of dishonest disposition (9)

4 Keys not normally given to these flats (11)

5 Head of choice, outsize lettuce (3)

6 Vera's wild parties (5)

7 Cold in centre of special treat for kids? (4-3)

8 Spare punts outside need these covers (8)

13 Pacella — but an unusual sort that is bitter (11)

15 Unaffected by working in the underground? (9)

16 Capital sort of university teacher, taken in by misanthrope (8)

18 Old pennies rained, perhaps, over one? (7)

19 Excitement of Emma's first proposal (7)

20 Turned leg can produce such a look (6)

22 Result of uniform temperature (5)

25 House god could be left on board (3)

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